SECOND EDITION

ROUTLEDGE

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN WORLD

EDITED BY PHILIP F. ESLER

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THE EARLY CHRISTIAN WORLD

SECOND EDITION

This new edition is a goldmine of up-to-date information for anyone interested in the development of early Christianity. The contributors represent an international collection of top-flight scholars, and the range of topics covered is expansive; yet the essays are written in an accessible style and could certainly be used in a classroom setting at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Of particular note is the way in which the essays situate Christianity within its broader cultural contexts, rather than treating it as if it had developed in a 'holy vacuum'. You will want this book on your shelf as a standard reference work for the study of early Christianity.

– Professor David Eastman, Ohio Wesleyan University, USA

Since its publication in 2000, *The Early Christian World* has come to be regarded by scholars, students and the general reader as one of the most informative and accessible works in English on the origins, development, character and major figures of early Christianity. In this new edition, the strengths of the first edition are retained. These include the book's attractive architecture that initially takes a reader through the context and historical development of early Christianity; the essays in critical areas such as community formation, everyday experience, the intellectual and artistic heritage, and external and internal challenges; and the profiles on the most influential early Christian figures. The book also preserves its strong stress on the social reality of early Christianity and continues its distinctive use of hundreds of illustrations and maps to bring that world to life. Yet the years that have passed since the first edition was published have seen great advances made in our understanding of early Christianity in its world. This new edition fully reflects these developments and provides the reader with authoritative, lively and up-to-date access to the early Christian world. A quarter of the text is entirely new and the remaining essays have all been carefully revised and updated by their authors. Some of the new material relates to Christian culture (including book culture, canonical and non-canonical scriptures, saints and hagiography, and translation across cultures). But there are also new essays on: Jewish and Christian interaction in the early centuries; Roman Britain, ritual; experience of the supernatural via angels, demons, miracles and magic; Manichaeism; Pachomius the Great and Gregory of Nyssa. This new edition will serve its readers for many years to come.

Philip F. Esler is the Portland Chair in New Testament Studies and Director of the International Centre for Biblical Interpretation in the University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham, UK. His research focus lies primarily in the social-scientific analysis of biblical and extra-biblical texts and ancient legal papyri, and he also writes on the Bible and the visual arts and on New Testament theology.

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PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

Since its publication in 2000, *The Early Christian World* has come to be regarded by scholars, students and the general reader as one of the most informative and accessible works in English on the origins, development, character and major figures of early Christianity. In this new edition, the strengths of the first edition are retained. These include: the book's architecture that initially takes a reader through the context and historical development of early Christianity; the essays in critical areas such as community formation, everyday experience, the intellectual and artistic heritage, and external and internal challenges; and the profiles on the most influential early Christian figures. This new edition also preserves its strong emphasis on the social reality of early Christianity and continues its distinctive use of hundreds of illustrations, maps and charts to bring that world to life.

Yet the seventeen years that have passed since the first edition was published have seen great advances made in our understanding of early Christianity in its world. There has been an expanding concern with identity, especially ethnic and non-ethnic identities, such as with respect to relations between Jews (or 'Judeans') and Christians (or 'Christ-followers'), and the impact of the Greco-Roman world on Christianity. Issues of sexuality and gender have become increasingly prominent. There has also been a growing interest in Christian culture and in the material dimensions of early Christian writing, and early Christian *realia* are attracting increased attention. Ritual studies, strongly linked to the recent research into the cognitive dimensions of religion, have become a mature area of research. Particular areas that now have a strong claim for inclusion include canonical and non-canonical scriptures, hagiography, translation across languages, Manichaeism and two saints omitted from the first edition, Pachomius the Great and Gregory of Nyssa. In addition, a number of scholars in this field have come to prominence in the last seventeen years and this new edition provides an opportunity for their work to become more widely known.

This new edition fully reflects these developments and *desiderata* and provides the reader with authoritative, lively and up-to-date access to the early Christian world. Eleven new chapters have been added (11, 16, 18, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 46, 42, 55) and eleven of the original chapters have been written afresh by different scholars (5, 6, 19, 28, 32, 36, 38, 44, 47, 48, 53). Thus, roughly 35 per cent of the text is entirely new. The remaining essays have been carefully revised and updated by their original authors (except in one case, where we have retained the fine original and added an extra, supplementary chapter: 17 and 18). There is a whole new section on Christian culture (covering *realia*, scriptures in early Christianity, saints and hagiography, and translation across cultures). But there are also new essays on Jewish and Christian interaction in the early centuries, the New Testament in

Roman Britain, ritual, Manichaeism, Pachomius the Great and Gregory of Nyssa. Whereas there were 230 Figures (images, maps and charts) in the original edition, this number has now expanded to 303. It is hoped that this new edition will serve its readers for many years to come.

In preparing this edition I have been greatly helped by the Taylor & Francis staff. First, I must thank Amy Davis-Poynter who originally approached me in mid 2014 to undertake a revised edition and attended to many of the early details. Thereafter Lola Harre provided valuable help. Most recently, especially in the very busy months leading up to my submission of the manuscript, Lizzi Thomasson has been very professional in her assistance, including in the speed with which she replied to any issues that I raised and in sorting out numerous issues relating to the Figures. I am most grateful to all of them.

Lastly, shortly before this manuscript was complete, Bernard Carey, a close friend of mine for over forty-five years since we first met as we were starting Arts/Law degrees at Sydney University, died in Bristol. I dedicate this book to his memory.

PART I

The context

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THE MEDITERRANEAN CONTEXT OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Philip F. Esler

Introduction

During its first four centuries, from 30 to 430 CE, the phenomenon we now designate as Christianity[1] was closely connected with the Mediterranean region, which also constituted the original heartland of the Roman Empire (see Figure 1.1). Vital Christian areas, such as Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, North Africa, Gallia Narbonensis and Spain were all washed by the Mediterranean Sea. Parts of the empire further afield, like Cappadocia, Pontus and Bithynia, and even Gaul and Britain had been deeply affected by Mediterranean influences, either by their close proximity to the places just mentioned, or by the ubiquitous practices of Roman provincial administration, or both. There were Christians developing notable traditions somewhat away from the Mediterranean and outside the Roman empire, in places like Armenia and Ethiopia, or even further afield, in India, but they were a small minority of the total Christian population. In any event, even they had been shaped by the missionaries from the Mediterranean countries who had evangelised them.

This context for early Christianity inevitably prompts three fundamental questions: first, in what sense are we able to speak of a Mediterranean region in the first five centuries of our era – that is, was it distinctive and, if so, how? Second, what effect did the ensemble of natural and human features constituting this region have on the new religious movement struggling to be born and grow in its midst? And, third, what impact did Christianity have in turn on its Mediterranean context? Posing the matter like this involves acknowledging the validity of the insight from the sociology of knowledge that there is a dialectic relationship between social settings and the religious institutions and ideas which arise within them, with the settings contributing to the creation of the institutions and ideas while they in turn have an impact on their social settings (Berger 1969: 41, 47; Esler 1994: 10). My aim in this chapter is to set out the broad outlines of an answer to the first of these questions, with occasional reference to the second and third, which constitute a central interest in the essays in this work.

Although my focus will be on geographic, socio-economic and broad cultural questions, other contributors in the first broad section of this volume will deal with other aspects of the ancient Mediterranean context of Christianity, such as the political dominance of Rome, or (from 330 CE) Rome and Constantinople together (Jill Harries in Chapter 2), Graeco-Roman philosophy and religion (Luther Martin in Chapter 3) and Judaism (James Aitken in Chapter 4).

THE ROMAN EMPIRE IN A.D. 60
LINDUM
VIROCONIUM
BRITANNIA
(4 legions)
LONDINIUM
VETERA (2)
NOVAESIUM
BONNA
MOGUNTIACUM
VINDONISSA
BELGICA
DUROCORTORUM
LUGDUNENSIS
ARGENTORATE
AGRI DECUMATES
Rhenus
Danuvius
Albis
AUGUSTA VINDELICUM
CARNUNTUM
NORICUM
PANNONIA
RAETIA
VIRUNUM
AQUITANIA
BURDIGALA
LUGDUNUM
ALPES COTTIAE
ALPES MARITIMAE
POETOVIO
DALMATIA
BURNUM
SALONAE
NARBONENSIS
NARBO
TARRACONENSIS
(with Lusitania 3 legions)
TARRACO
LUSITANIA
EMERITA AUGUSTA
ITALIA
ROMA
SARDINIA ET CORSICA
CORDUBA
BAETICA
CARALES
SICILIA
SYRACUSE
TINGIS
CAESAREA (IOL)
CARTHAGO
MAURETANIA TINGITANA
MAURETANIA CAESARIENSIS
THEVESTE
AFRICA
NUMIDIA
1 GERMANIA SUPERIOR (military area)
2 GERMANIA INFERIOR (military area)
0 500 km
A B C D
1 2 3 4 5

Figure 1.1 The Roman empire in 60 CE. Reproduced by permission of Routledge

The Mediterranean as a physically distinctive region

Topography and climate

'The Mediterranean is a great gulf of the Atlantic cutting back into the land mass of the Eastern Hemisphere' (Semple 1932: 4). It carries the ocean 2,330 miles from the straights of Gibraltar to Lebanon, thus in effect giving Asia an Atlantic seaboard. It is enclosed by three continents – to the north, south and east. The northern, or European, coastline, measuring some 13,000 kilometres, is deeply dissected by peninsulas and islands, lying behind which is a fertile hinterland, these two features together providing the basis for the development of maritime trade. The southern, or African, coastline, only 5,000 kilometres long, is barely dissected at all by natural features and has situated behind it lands which are frequently arid, with Egypt, watered by the Nile, being the notable exception. The eastern, or Asiatic, coastline is some 6,000 kilometres long, with much of this due to the deeply indented coastline of Asia Minor. Historically, the Asian part continually mediated between the great civilisations of the east, in the Tigris and Euphrates valleys and even India, and those in the west.

In geological terms, the Mediterranean Sea is relatively young, occupying the areas of depression interposed between the belts of young folded mountains stretching across north-west Africa, southern Europe (especially the peninsulas of Spain, Italy and Greece) and the Asian ranges of the Caucasus and the Taurus. Throughout the region are found narrow coastal plains, while further inland deep valleys separate the folds of young mountains, or intersperse the old plateaus that survived the recent burst of mountain building. Extensive flat areas suitable for tillage are uncommon (Semple 1932: 4–34).

At a general level, similar climatic conditions occur across the Mediterranean lands. The characteristic pattern is that of winter rains and summer droughts. During summer, when the sun's rays are vertical at the equator, the Mediterranean is subjected to hot and dry northeast trade winds, which supplant the rain-bearing westerly winds of winter and a heat belt moves north from Saharan Africa. In winter the reverse occurs, and the westerlies sweep in across the sea dropping their precipitation, especially when they meet obstacles such as the mountains of Lebanon and Palestine. In many areas, the summer drought is hard on vegetation, and irrigation can be required to maintain plant growth (Semple 1932: 83–101).

Yet the region produces staple cereals (which are generally sown in autumn around the onset of the rains and harvested in early summer), vegetables and fruits (including figs and grapes) and provides reasonable pasturage for small animals, especially sheep and goats, but is not so good for cattle. Most characteristic of the Mediterranean is the ubiquitous olive, whose deep roots allow it to survive the summer drought and produce the oil that in the ancient period was eaten, burnt to provide illumination and used for anointing the skin. The olive takes several years to produce its first fruit and is a reminder of the sedentary nature of Mediterranean life (Finley 1985: 31).

The steady northeast trade winds, which the Greeks called 'Etesian', appear in late May and begin to fade in mid-September. For the ancients this was the only safe season for sailing in the Mediterranean. The cyclonic storms typical of winter made navigation hazardous. Hesiod advised his readers 'to avoid the winter sea when the winds war loud' (*Works and Days* 619–25). Merchant vessels operated between 10 March and 10 November, but the safe period was from May to September (Semple 1932: 579–81).

Yet these characteristics common to the region can be deceptive. In 2000, when the original edition of this book was in production, Peregrine Hordern and Nicholas Purcell published a major work entitled *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*. While trying to provide a version of Fernand Braudel's 1949 magnum opus (*La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen a l'époque de Philippe II*) appropriate for the ancient Mediterranean and seeking to link ecological, social and political dimensions of the region, Hordern and Purcell above all stressed that it was best understood as an assemblage of a large number of micro-regions that were a response in part to the fact that there was a large measure of climatic variability across the region. This meant that the human population

exploited its fragmented landscape and variable climate in a wide variety of different ways. One result of this was that crop failure or another catastrophe in one micro-region might be balanced by a successful harvest in other places, with the sea allowing movement of food from an area of surplus to an area of deficit. Thus the picture was one of fragmentation yet also connectivity enabled by the relative ease of seaborne trade.

Ancient Greek and Roman views on the Mediterranean as a distinct region

The fact that modern people are accustomed to thinking of the Mediterranean as a distinctive region for a variety of reasons, such as its geomorphic structure, climate, culture and vegetation – especially in contrast to Northern Europe – does not necessarily mean that its ancient inhabitants had a similar understanding. Nevertheless, the ancient Mediterranean did have a regional identity and its inhabitants recognised this.

The Greeks and Romans broadly divided the area surrounding the Mediterranean Sea into three continents of Europe, Asia and Africa (which they called Libya: Herodotus, 4.42; Strabo, Book 1). Herodotus (writing *c.* 450 BCE) shrewdly pointed out that Europe is as long as the other two put together (*Histories* 4.42).[2] Like the rest of the ancient world, Herodotus was richly aware of the huge variety of locales, peoples, languages and customs, represented around and inland from its shores. In his *Histories* he inaugurated the focused study of particular peoples in their homelands, with his accounts of the Egyptians in Book 2 (35–99) and the Scythians in Book 4 (2–36, 46–82) and was followed by a large number of Greek and Roman authors (Almagor and Skinner 2013). Yet in spite of this diversity, the sea itself permitted reasonably easy communication between all of these areas and groups. A remarkably useful discovery such as a phonetic alphabet, deployed soon after its discovery by Semitic peoples such as Phoenicians and Israelites, was soon adopted by the Greeks with whom the latter traded. Technological and artistic developments, religious cults, philosophic ideas and literary genres quickly spread across the region. Greek and later Latin became widely used lingua francas. 'Ceaseless intercourse back and forth along "the wet ways" bound together the Mediterranean peoples into one great community life' (Semple 1932: 11). In due course, the Mediterranean would become a vital highway for the spread and institutionalisation of the Christian message (see Chapter 14 of this work).

The ancient Greeks and Romans recognised this sense of regionality. Plato's Socrates said of those who lived between the Phasis river (in the east) and the Pillars of Heracles (that is, the straits of Gibraltar, in the west) that 'living around the sea we are like ants or frogs around a pond' (*Phaedo* 109B). The Romans called the region the *orbis terrarum*, the circle of lands, a notion also invoked by an anonymous Greek lyric poet who wrote of 'the sea-bound circle of the whole dry land' (*Greek Anthology* 9, *Epigram* 672; Paton 1915: 375). Greeks and Romans referred to the Mediterranean as 'our sea' (*mare nostrum*), 'this sea' and, simply, 'the sea'.

Ancient Mediterranean map-making

This sense of regionality emerged in ancient attempts to map the world. Older understandings of the cosmos assumed a flat earth, circular in shape and often surrounded by ocean. The Mesopotamian version of this model (which is well represented in the Old Testament) consisted of a flat triple-decker universe, divided into heaven, earth and underworld. Herodotus (writing *c.* 450 BCE) scoffed at map-makers who drew the earth in perfectly circular fashion, with Oceanus running round the circumference, and with Europe and Asia of roughly equal size (*Histories* 4.36). He may well have had the maps of Anaximander and Hecataeus, both of Miletus, in his sights (Kirk and Raven 1971: 104). Figure 1.2 is a reasonable modern reconstruction of what such a map might have looked like.[3] Such attempts naturally situated 'our sea' near the centre of the world.

Figure 1.2 Conjectural reconstruction of Hecataeus' map of the world. From Dilke 1985: 56

By the beginning of the first century CE, however, these cosmologies had largely been replaced in educated Greek and Roman circles by the realisation that the earth was a sphere, not a disk. As early as the second half of the sixth century BCE, Pythagoras and Parmenides of Elea had proposed a spherical earth (Dilke 1985: 25). Aristotle (384–322 BCE) offered proofs for the earth's sphericity, such as the earth throwing a round shadow on the moon at eclipses (Thomson 1948: 118; Aristotle, *de Caelo* 297b) and Eratosthenes (*c.* 275–194 BCE) actually achieved a remarkably accurate measurement of its circumference of around 25,000 miles (Thomson 1948: 159–61).

The inhabited quadrant of the globe (which the Greeks called the *oikoumene*) was thought to stretch roughly from the straits of Gibraltar in the west to India and China in the east. While residing in Rome in about 168 BCE, Crates of Pergamum designed an orb which set out the position of the *oikoumene* in relation to other (imagined) parts of the globe (Strabo 2.5.10; Dilke 36), as conjectured in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3 Reconstruction of Crates' Orb, a terrestrial globe made *c.* 170–160 BCE to make sense of Homeric geography. From Dilke (1985: 36)

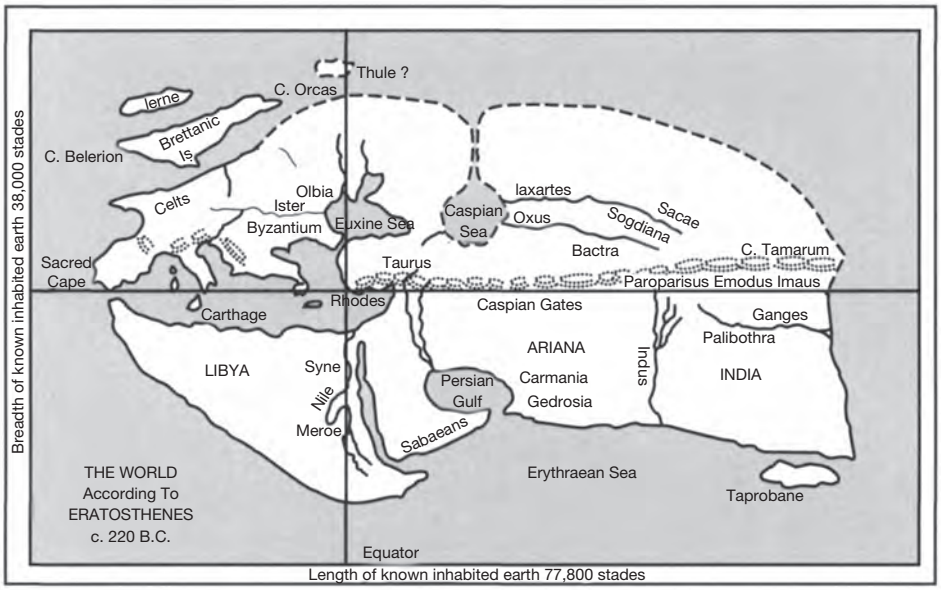

Figure 1.4 Simplified reconstruction of Eratosthenes' map of the inhabited quadrant of the globe – the *oikoumene*. From Dilke (1985: 33)

From as early as the fifth century BCE, thought was being given to the need to map the *oikoumene* of the globe onto a flat surface and what shape to give it, with Democritus of Abdera opting for an oblong with the proportion of length (east-west) to width (north-south) as 3:2 (Dilke 1985: 25). Eratosthenes produced what may be regarded as the first really scientific map (Dilke 1985: 33–5). Figure 1.4 suggests what this might have been like.

In the period before his death in 12 BCE, Marcus Agrippa, a close supporter of Octavian, had begun to erect a world map in Rome, which Octavian completed after Agrippa's death. It was extremely detailed, both as to place names and distances between places (Dilke 1985: 41–53). With the collapse of Rome, however, older and more primitive cosmologies would once again come to the fore (Thomson 1948: 351–91). Overly intrepid voyagers would later be warned of the perils of falling off the world's edge.

Recent research has begun to open up aspects of ancient Roman map-making that have direct implications for understanding the early Christ-movement and the form of some of its written outputs, such as the topography of Palestine and Greek East as they appear in Paul's letters, the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles (Kloppenborg 2016). There was a type of document known in Greek as *periplous* (plural = *periploi*) and in Latin as *periplus* (plural = *peripli*), meaning 'a sailing around', which listed harbours, coastal landmarks and maritime hazards in order and with approximate intervening distances to aid captains of vessels in making their voyages. Hecataeus of Miletus (*c.* 550–476 BCE) wrote one of these (the *Periodos gēs*, 'Journey around the earth'), although his work also provided information about peoples along the route. This work and others like it show clearly the centrality of the Mediterranean to ancient Greeks and Romans; by sailing around the Mediterranean (and its extension, the Black Sea) one could describe the world. One such document, the *Stadiasmus Maris Magni*, from the second half of the third century CE, is extant in large fragments that lists distances between various harbours in the Levant (Dilke 1985: 140–1; Kloppenborg 2016: 101–43). There are also several references in ancient sources to *itineraria* and *itineraria picta* ('painted maps'; Cuntz 1929–1990). After the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE, Augustus deputed Agrippa to create a long rectangular map, not just a list of places, and erect it at the Porticus Vipsania (Kloppenborg 2016).

Cultural aspects of context

An initial caveat: the issue of cultural difference

'Culture' refers to the totality of efforts by human beings to create a world for themselves, material and non-material, with the latter including phenomena such as social relations, roles, values and institutions. A preliminary problem which arises in considering any foreign culture, whether distant from us in space or time, is the fact that our immersion in our own culture equips us with a whole set of cues for understanding non-material social features which might well get in the road of our comprehending the other culture. Unless we are careful, we are likely to project ethnocentric or anachronistic interpretations onto other human subjects – in effect, to make the unfortunate blunder of assuming that they are really like us when they might differ in all sorts of ways that they, and we, would consider significant. Eminent ancient historian Peter Brown has spoken of the need to remove 'the patina of the obvious' from that which we are investigating (1972: 18–20). An increasing number of commentators, in the biblical and classical fields, have discovered recently that one way to remove this patina is by drawing upon the recent anthropological research into the modern Mediterranean. This research provides us with a valuable set of social scenarios, or strategies, which are heuristic tools, not social laws, for interpreting the data. They allow us to ask new questions of the ancient data and to make sense of the answers we get (along the lines of 'drawing lines between the dots'). Although these scenarios are not necessarily those of the ancient Mediterranean, the measure of similarity is striking. Moreover, they are certainly far more appropriate than the (usually unrecognised) scenarios derived from modern Northern European and North American individualism which so often undergird modern interpretations in this field.

The initial stage of anthropological research into the Mediterranean region is found in the work written or edited by Pitt-Rivers (1955, 1963, 1965, 1977), Campbell (1964), Peristiany (1965), Bourdieu (1965), Davis (1977) and many of the essays in Gilmore (1987), to mention only some of the main examples which I have recently reviewed (Esler 2011a: 35–76). Much of this work stressed honour as the primary value in Mediterranean society, essentially meaning a person's claim to worth and the social acknowledgement of that claim, the opposite of which is shame. More recently, some anthropologists, such as Herzfeld (1984, 1987), have criticised the pan-Mediterranean value system proposed in the first generation of research. In so far as Herzfeld has warned us against the reification of the Mediterranean area, his contributions are welcome. Contemporary anthropologists should always test the findings of earlier generations of research in relation to new contexts and new perspectives, such as those of a feminist or post-modernist motivation. Nevertheless, the newer work does not necessitate that the older results are now outmoded, only that we should be alert to the possibility of diversity and nuance in ways we had not previously appreciated. The research of the last thirty years represents a vigorous and critical development of the field, not its rejection or replacement. To cite but one example, while Abu-Lughod has provided a more nuanced picture of the role and influence of women in Bedouin culture (1986), she still depends on the original discoveries in the field (usually made by male anthropologists who simply did not have great access to female informants) when she observes that 'individuals in Bedouin society appear able to express through poetry the sentiments of weakness that violate the honor code' (1986: 233). A recent book by R. L. Oprisko (2012) has underlined the continuing importance of honour for the study of human societies. This work, together with the emphasis by Oprisko and others on 'face' (the process, to an extent symbolled on the face, by which an individual gains, loses and maintains his or her status as a recognised member in an honour-group), has been fruitfully applied by David Harvey in a study of Galatians (2016).

A macrosociological dimension: an advanced agrarian society

Agricultural surplus, urban elite and the peasantry

The first dimension of the cultural aspects of the Mediterranean context we need to consider is the broad socio-economic system of the ancient Mediterranean world. Here, to organise our approach to the subject and to raise a useful agenda of questions, it helps to borrow some insights from macrosociology, in particular the approach to that field elaborated by Gerhard Lenski and Jean Lenski in *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology*. In the first edition of this work, reference was made to the fifth edition of the Lenskis' book from 1987. It is now in its thirteenth edition (2014), co-authored by Patrick Nolan and Gerhard Lenski (who died in 2015). The Lenskis focused upon the development of social systems from a preindustrial stage, beginning with hunting and gathering societies, proceeding to horticultural societies, and then agrarian (simple and advanced) before moving on to industrial and industrialising societies. Their model is further explained and utilised by Richard Rohrbaugh in Chapter 8 of this work.

Mediterranean societies in the period in question can be analysed in terms of what Lenski and Lenski call the advanced agrarian type. Since this is really part of a model of the socio-economic system, and a model drawn at a fairly high level of abstraction, not an empirical description of such a system, the following account in no way precludes variations across time and space,[4] even on matters as fundamental as the contrast between the typical prevalence of state ownership of land in the temple-states of the ancient Near East and the widespread private ownership of land in Greece and Rome (Finley 1985: 28–9).

The advanced agrarian stage was characterised at a technological level by the use of the plough that allowed permanent cultivation of a much larger area of land than among horticulturists and which thus facilitated the production of agricultural surpluses. In response to these surpluses a broad social and political structure tended to develop. Typically, a tiny ruling elite (2–5 per cent of the population), centred in cities, exercised authority over large numbers of peasants and took a large proportion of their surplus to support their often luxurious life in the city and the religious cult or cults which it contained. As time went on, especially with the introduction of iron ploughs in the first millennium BCE that increased production even more, the number of 'retainers' catering directly to the needs of the elite, such as household servants, stewards and scribes, together with other groups serving them indirectly such as artisans and merchants, grew considerably.

As well as controlling the means of economic production, the elite enjoyed most political power and status and had a virtual monopoly on literacy, through their control over trained scribes. Very few peasants usually learned to read and write in this type of culture (Harris 1989). There was an enormous social distance between those at the top of this extremely hierarchical society and those at the bottom, generally attended by the scorn the elite felt for the non-elite (see Chapter 8 on this approach to stratification as applied to Herodian Palestine).

Yet we should always be open to the complexity of the data, and augment or amend our models whenever necessary. Thus, Averil Cameron (1991: 30) argues that although the Roman empire of the first two centuries CE was characterised by a strong horizontal demarcation between an educated elite and the rest of society, by the fourth century CE the situation had significantly changed: the civil and military had separated, an increase in government posts had opened up the old elite and confused demarcation lines and traditional culture was being challenged by an alternative Christian one, and there was an alternative elite in the form of Christian bishops.

Peter Garnsey has also argued for another dimension to changes in the empire from the first to the fourth centuries – the decline of the urban aristocracy (1998b).[5] At the beginning of the period, the members of the urban elite of the cities across the provinces of the empire, the decurions or curiales,

were required to bear the brunt of the financial burdens of imperial administration (the munera). Using the resources derived largely from their rural holdings, they held magistracies, constructed buildings, paid for religious cults and liturgies, and distributed largesse to the citizenry, with the significant enhancement to their honour that resulted representing adequate compensation for the heavy expenditure. Possibly as early as the late third century, and certainly by the fourth, however, various factors, such as the mounting costs of government and a decline in local prosperity, meant that these responsibilities had lost their appeal. Faced with a flight of decurions from the cities, the imperial government responded by seeking to block their entry into other areas of life, in effect trying to turn them into an hereditary order, even if this was never successfully achieved – and a succession of imperial decrees in the Theodosian code directing errant decurions to return to their cities to perform liturgies suggests that it was not (Garnsey 1998b: 3). In the fourth century, imperial exemption of Christian clergy from the duties of the decurionate, such as that as enacted by an edict of Constantine on 21 October 319 (Codex Theodosianus 16.2.2; Croke and Harries 1982: 16) proved a most valuable benefit.

Conditions for the non-elite

Life for the non-elite members of ancient society in agrarian societies of the advanced agrarian type tended to be difficult, although it is useful to distinguish between those who were free in status and those who were unfree. The largest component of those free was the peasantry. By the time peasants had paid taxes to the local political ruler and often to the local temple as well, there might be little left to support themselves and their families. Hunger was common, and the peasantry could even be drafted into military service or made to work on construction projects. Poor harvests generally meant that the peasants had to borrow at high interest rates, with the loans often secured against their next crop or their land itself. A very visible sign of this was the way in which the elite acquired peasants' land, by taking over fields that had been used to secure loans. It was very common for peasants to be forced off their land in these circumstances and to become tenant farmers, landless labourers or even beggars. These pressures sometimes led to the flight of peasants from the land altogether and to the consequent break up of families. Right across the empire, as Garnsey notes (1998c: 93), the expansion of elite land ownership in the form of concentrated holdings, or *latifundia*, worked largely by slaves, meant that this was a world 'in which peasant proprietors were being steadily transformed into tenant farmers, agricultural labourers, unemployed and underemployed urban residents'. The history of the Roman empire in the first four centuries of Christianity repeatedly reveals the consequences of imperial or local pressures caused by extractive processes on the peasantry (also see Finley 1985: 102–9).

Indeed, the large number of slaves on the land in Italy and other parts of the empire, including Greece, mean that peasants should not be the total focus of enquiry. Rome is often referred to as a 'slave state' (Garnsey 1998c: 91). On the other hand, recent research has suggested that it is a mistake to differentiate too sharply between freemen and slaves in the area of agricultural production. Peasants comprise various groups, such as those who own their own land, those who rent land from others and landless agricultural labourers. All three groups need at times to work on other peoples' holdings and this was certainly the case with the peasants of the ancient Mediterranean, even to the extent of their lending a hand to the regular slave workforce on *latifundia* at certain times of the year (Rathbone 1981: 19; Garnsey 1998d). Ironically, slaves (at least those capable of work) probably went hungry less frequently than peasants, since they were provided for from the resources of their wealthy owners, which is not to say that we should underestimate the possibility for savage treatment of slaves even in an urban environment.

The Ancient Mediterranean economy

'Economics' did not exist as a separate area of enquiry in the ancient Mediterranean. The very word derives, in fact, from *oikonomia*, meaning the management of the *oikos*, or private household – a subject

in which there was a keen interest (as in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*). More than this, however, the ancient world did not possess an 'economy', in the modern sense of an autonomous area of human interaction largely separate from other social features and governed by the use of money and markets, with associated arrangements for trade and exchange. Karl Polanyi persuasively argued in *The Great Transformation* (1944) that the movement from a preindustrial society (such as that of the ancient Mediterranean) to an industrial one was marked by a transition from an 'embedded' economy to a 'disembedded' one. In the ancient world, what we refer to as the economic aspects of a social system (pre-eminently the city) were subordinated to other features of which the most important were kinship, politics and religion. Commentators who follow this approach and insist that ancient economic realities can only be understood within this framework are called (perhaps not very helpfully) 'substantivists', while those who, on the other hand, insist that modern formal economic concepts are applicable to preindustrial, non-market economies are referred to as 'formalists' (Kaplan 1968).

One of the most significant 'substantivist' contributions to study in this area came with the publication of *The Ancient Economy* by Moses Finley in 1973 (second edition 1985). In a manner consonant with the Lenski and Lenski model set out earlier, he argued strongly for an idea of Max Weber's that the ancient city was a 'consumption centre', parasitically living off the produce of the surrounding countryside, while not engaging much in manufacturing and offering little in return (1973: 125–6). Although Finley did recognise that some cities were commercial centres (1973: 126–31), one critique of his views in the debate he provoked has been that he has underestimated the extent of the services ancient cities did provide to the surrounding areas or further afield. Donald Engels has argued such a case for Corinth, for example, calling it a 'service city' (1990). Corinth was certainly located at a strategic point for trade, since goods were carried across the isthmus from the Gulf of Corinth to the Saronic (see Figure 1.5) and many people, including Paul, passed through the city, no doubt enjoying some of the sophisticated civic facilities, such as fountains, that it had to offer (see Figures 1.6 and 1.7).

Figure 1.5 The isthmus at Corinth from the Akrocorinth, with the waters of the Gulf of Corinth to the left and the Saronic Gulf to the right. Photo Philip F. Esler

Figure 1.6 The Lechaion Road in Corinth, that ran from the port of Lechaeum south to the city, with Akrocorinth in the background. Photo Philip F. Esler

Figure 1.7 The Peirene fountain in Corinth, on the left-hand side of the Lechaion Road as it passed from north to south through the city. Photo: Philip F. Esler

Much the same case could probably be made for Ostia, Rome's port at the mouth of the Tiber, through which a huge amount of produce was channelled to the capital, being unloaded from ocean-going boats in its harbour and then shipped up the river on barges. The impressive array of commercial buildings in the current ruins of Ostia testifies to the vibrancy of this trade and the large number of personnel who must have been engaged in it.

Yet we should not let the atypical displace our understanding of the typical. While the possibility of existing on trade was very real for maritime cities, especially those as favoured in their location as Corinth or Ostia, for inland cities the difficulties and great cost of transport and the abiding realities of the grip of the elite on the peasantry across the region probably make Finley's the more attractive model (Oakman 1996). Neither can there be much doubt that the most significant economic reality in the ancient Mediterranean in the first few centuries of the Christian era was the extent to which Rome (with its population of about one million – Garnsey and Saller 1987: 62) drained resources out of the provinces in the form of taxes, especially huge shipments of wheat from Egypt, to supply its large population, including the retainers who served the emperor. This is a good example of the extent to which the realities of imperial power and economic issues were closely integrated. This process has been usefully modelled by Douglas Oakman (see Figure 1.8).

Nevertheless, one area, in particular, provides evidence that runs counter to Finley's position. In part this was due to the rapidly growing archaeological evidence for urban craftsmen and traders in the Roman world, with studies on the North African towns of Sabratha and Timgad, for example, that show them to have contained large numbers of workshops (Wilson 2001). But it was also due to the fact that the idea of a city and its hinterland constituting a self-sufficient unit fell prey to the new emphasis on cross-Mediterranean connectivity as advocated by Hordern and Purcell, whose work *The Corrupting Sea* (2000) was mentioned earlier (Flohr and Wilson 2016: 37–8).

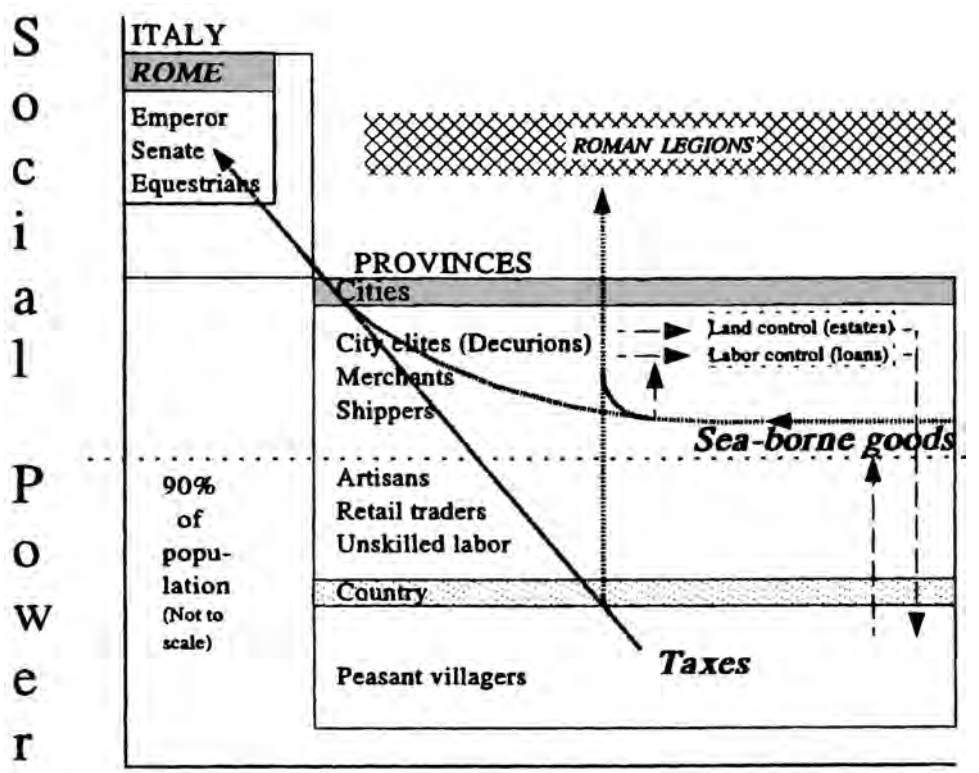

Figure 1.8 Roman political economy: a systems model. Oakman 1993: 204; slightly modified

Garnsey and Saller describe the Roman economy as 'undeveloped', by which they mean (at an admittedly high level of generality) that the mass of the population lived at a subsistence level off agricultural production, that the level of investment in manufacturing activities was low and that there was little by way of an entrepreneurial class. Poor transport facilities added both to the cost and the risk of manufacturing and trade, which is not to say that some areas of manufacture (for example pottery) or trade (as with wheat, olive oil and wine moving from Egypt, other parts of North Africa and Spain to Rome in large quantities) did not develop in spite of the difficulties. The prevalence of an aristocratic ideology that was inimical to any profitable enterprise except agricultural production restricted the development of a prosperous and confident merchant class (1987: 43–5).

Religion, kinship and politics

As with 'economics', it is anachronistic to speak of 'religion' as having an existence separate from politics or the family in the context of the ancient Mediterranean world. The classic case for this position, presented by William Cantwell Smith decades ago (Smith 1962; Esler 2003: 7–8), has now been augmented by the work of Brent Nongbri, who argues for the reciprocal development of 'religion' and 'secularism' in the modern period (Nongbri 2015). Across the ancient Mediterranean region, the features we label as 'religious' institutions and ideas were also embedded either in structures of political dominance such as the temples of officially recognised cults put in place by local aristocratic elites (including the imperial cult), in voluntary associations (Harland 2003, 2009), in mystery cults (Bowden 2010) and in the household. There was a political religious cultus at the political level and other voluntary or domestic religious practices and beliefs, but not 'religion' per se. Political religion employed the roles, values and aims of politics in religious ideologies and rites. It was characterised by functionaries combining cultic and political functions and tending powerful deities who provided well-being and prosperity or, if provoked, their opposite. Political religion was legitimated in 'the Great Tradition' (Redfield 1956: 68–84), the high and learned culture of the elite. Domestic religion frequently used the roles, values and aims of the household in religious expression. Its functionaries, to the extent that it had them, were family members, and it focused on the deities as the source of familial solidarity and commitment, and well-being for the family members (Malina 1986, 1994, 1996). Domestic religion was legitimated in 'the Little Tradition', the low or folk culture of the non-elite.

Persons, roles and values in the ancient Mediterranean world

The usefulness of anthropological research into contemporary Mediterranean culture for understanding ancient social patterns was proposed and defended above. In this section I will briefly set out some of the main results of this research – in relation to group-orientation, honour and shame, limited good and patronage – and indicate how it may help us contextualise and interpret ancient data in ways less likely to be affected by ethnocentrism and anachronism than approaches which do not avail themselves of social-scientific assistance.

Group-orientation and group identities

Perhaps the greatest difference between modern Northern European and North American cultures, or 'North Atlantic cultures hereafter',[6] and those of contemporary Mediterranean societies is the prevalence of individualism in the former and a strong sense of group-orientation in the latter. By 'individualism' I am referring to the notion that to a large extent persons find fulfilment in life through their own individual efforts – by thinking for themselves, by striking out on their own, for example by leaving their parents' home at an early stage to build a career in another city, and so on.

'Individualism' fosters virtues such as self-reliance, innovativeness and a capacity for introspection. 'Individualism' is not the same as 'individuality', which simply refers to the phenomenon of each person having the capacity to present himself or herself as a distinctive individual in relation to other persons, most notably by being pre-eminent in some way, and which characterises all societies, whether they are individualistic or not, or ancient or modern.

Most of the world is not individualistic in the sense just set out, although many people socialised in North Atlantic cultures often fail to see this. The more common pattern is of group-orientation, where individuals achieve fulfilment in relation to significant groups. The family is by far the most important group in such settings, although other groups such as one's village, town or city, tribe, people, or ethnic group also play a major role, as do voluntary associations in towns and cities. Since the start of the twenty-first century, a group of largely Canadian scholars have rightly insisted on the importance of understanding voluntary associations in Greco-Roman cities from the abundant evidence that survives on stone and papyrus for contextualising early Christ-movement communities (Paul's especially) within their urban environment (Harland 2003, 2009, 2014; Kloppenborg and Ascough 2011; Kloppenborg forthcoming).

In group-oriented cultures, individuals tend to align their activities and attitudes with those of the groups to which they belong (Malina 2001: 60–7). Typical virtues in such contexts are obedience to elders, respect for tradition, a willingness to share goods with other group members and a pronounced tendency to represent the group in its relations to other groups, which is often associated with inter-group competitiveness. One finding from recent research into the Mediterranean region has been the prevalence of group-orientation in cultures as far afield as Iraq in the east and Spain in the west.

Judean and Christ-movement identities

One of the most significant developments in biblical and early Christian studies since the first edition of this work was published in 2000 has been a growing sensitivity to the issue of group identities, in part reflecting a vibrant interest in the issue of identity in the social sciences and the humanities generally. This debate has been especially concerned with identities that are ethnic and 'racial' (Stone and Dennis 2003; Phoenix 2010). I have used inverted commas around 'racial' because I do not consider that 'races', meaning groups that can be categorised (and, often, hierarchically arranged) on the basis of inherited visible characteristics, exist, even though discrimination on the basis that they do exist is sadly common.

The broad issue of ethnic identity has, in particular, influenced discussion of the people whom the ancient sources refer to as *Ioudaioi* (Greek) or *Iudaei* (Latin). Many researchers now take the view that these people (the spiritual, cultural and in many cases physical ancestors of today's Jews) manifested an identity best described as 'ethnic' rather than 'religious'. Frequently cited in this connection is an important essay by Fredrik Barth in 1969 in which he argued against the older, 'primordial' view that ethnic groups were identified by fixed bundles of cultural characteristics. Instead, he reasoned that a group's sense of themselves as a group interacting with other groups came first and cultural indicators (which frequently changed over time) were used, as a boundary, to express that group identity. So understood, ethnic identity was a field of ascription and identification used by certain groups to organise their relationships with other groups (Barth 1969). But this fluidity of approach still left hanging the question of what made a particular group ethnic. Barth himself suggested that an ascription of someone to a social category was ethnic in character 'when it classifies a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, *presumptively determined by his origin and background*' (1969: 13; emphasis added). Yet this was still very general and applied to a family as much as to an ethnic group. A limited repertoire of features was needed that must, to accord with Barth's ascriptive and interactive approach, be regarded as diagnostic and not constitutive of ethnic identity. John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith provided just such a repertoire in 1996:

(a) a common proper name to identify the group;
(b) a myth of common ancestry;
(c) a shared history or shared memories of a common past, including heroes, events and their commemoration;
(d) a common culture, embracing such things as customs, language and religious beliefs and practices;
(e) a link with a homeland, either through actual occupation or by symbolic attachment to the ancestral land, as with diaspora peoples; and
(f) a sense of communal solidarity.

(Hutchinson and Smith 1996b: 6–7)

I applied an approach combining Barth with Hutchinson and Smith to a study of Romans in 2003 (Esler 2003: 41–4) and several other scholars have later done the same.

An increasing number of writers on the New Testament now agree that the identity of the *Ioudaioi* was an ethnic one in this sense, a position well argued by Steve Mason (2007; 2016). Strong support for this view comes from the fact that in his *Contra Apionem* the first-century author Josephus defends his people, the *Ioudaioi*, from attack not by arguing that they are different in some fundamental way from the other peoples (designated as *laoi*, *ethnē*, *genē*) in their world – all of whom were named after the homeland from which they sprang, whether they lived there or in diaspora communities – but were simply an excellent example of such a group. The approach to ethnic identity just described finds responsive data in this text in relation to many peoples, including the *Ioudaioi* (Esler 2009).

Not all of the researchers who regard *Ioudaios* as an ethnic identity, however, have yet proved willing to follow that insight to its two logical conclusions, namely, that the word is correctly translated 'Judean' and not 'Jew' or 'Jewish' and that 'Judaism', which focuses almost exclusively on religious beliefs and practices (only one aspect of a much larger ethnic identity), is inappropriate as a means for encapsulating the identity of this people, for the first century CE at least. Following this path, moreover, means that the relationship between Judean ethnic identity and Christ-movement identity (which was clearly not ethnic but rather akin to that of a voluntary association, especially those which contained members from various ethnic groups) was asymmetrical. Recent efforts to 'ethnicise' or, even worse, 'racialise' Christ-movement identity and minimise the distance between Judeans and Christ-followers in the first century and later (Buell 2005; Horrell 2011, 2016) are unconvincing (Mason and Esler 2017). Recognising the asymmetrical relationship between the two has major implications for how New Testament texts are read (Esler 2007, 2011b, 2013, 2016).

Honour and shame

A central value in the modern Mediterranean is honour, meaning one's own sense of worth and the corroboration of that understanding by a relevant group, typically the village in which one lives. The opposite of honour is shame. While honour and shame take on different connotations in different settings around the Mediterranean, so that we must always be alive to their particular nuances, its foundational role in Mediterranean social relations is quite remarkable. Honour can either be ascribed, that is simply attributed to a person by virtue of birth or position, or achieved, that is, actively gained from another in various social arenas in forms of interaction described as the pattern of challenge-and-response. The desire to obtain honour motivates many interactions between individuals and the groups whom they represent. Since the start of the twenty-first century, many New Testament critics, stimulated by Bruce Malina's foundational text *The New Testament World* (2001; first edition 1981), have utilised the centrality of honour to approach the biblical texts in quite fresh ways. Many classical scholars have moved in the same direction, as in J. E. Lendon's 1997 work *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World* and Carlin Barton's work (from 2001) *Roman Honor: The Fire in the Bones*, which offer nuanced accounts of the role of honour in the pattern of imperial control and Roman life, but without neglecting other aspects of the system, including wealth and power.

There are two aspects to the close connection between the fact of group-orientation and the importance of this value. First, while individuals do seek honour for themselves, the groups to whom they belong will also share in that honour and, second, its very existence is dependent on the opinion of some larger social grouping. The Mediterranean world is, and was, intensely competitive. Individuals and groups continually strove with one another to promote their individual or group honour at the expense of some other person or group. This conflict-ridden nature of the culture has led some to refer to it as agonistic (Malina 2001: 33–6). The Roman triumph, for example, was an institution which celebrated a major (and necessarily bloody) victory of Roman armies over their enemies by offering a status elevation ritual for the imperator and his legions and a status degradation ritual for the defeated nations, whose representatives were paraded along in the procession (Esler 1995c: 242–5). If a slight to the honour of oneself or one's group could not be rectified immediately, ancient Mediterranean people nursed powerful hopes of revenge until it could be.

Gender is closely connected with honour and shame, especially to the extent that women must keep within the authority of the men in their lives, either fathers, brothers or husbands, if the men are to preserve their honour. Shame also refers to a woman's honour; her 'shame' is something she must preserve. If a man's daughter, sister or wife is seduced, not only has the woman lost her shame, but her father, brother or husband incur gross dishonour which will require heavy vengeance to restore the status quo ante. Thus honour is held by groups as well as the individuals who represent those groups in dealings with outsiders. This pattern is an exceedingly common one across the Mediterranean. In many parts of the Mediterranean women were, where economically possible, largely relegated to the private sphere of the house, while men operated in the public sphere. But this is not to say that women could not also have roles outside the house, with Susan Hylen having recently described 'virtuous, active women in the Greco-Roman World' (Hylen 2015: 15–42 and the works she cites). In addition, through the use of their dowries, women could play a major role in the commercial activities and sometimes overshadow their husbands (Esler 2017 for Nabatean women).

One could choose to compare aspects of the anthropological model set out above with many of the social realities of the Roman empire in the period 66–430 CE. I will cite two examples. First of all, J. E. Lendon has presented a cogent case for the important role of honour in the area of imperial control (1997). Second, and more specifically, Peter Brown has developed an argument that is particularly helpful here. Brown suggests that in the golden years of the empire, in the period up to about 260 CE, the age of the Antonines, the Greco-Roman elites were motivated by philotimia, love of honour. Propelled by philotimia, individual members of the elite strove to outshine one another in the generosity of the services they offered their local polis, as recorded in the huge number of inscriptions which survive. But the strong competitive urges were channelled into or at least mitigated by attention to the collective life of the town. 'The competitiveness of philotimia still assumed and needed, as it had done for centuries, an audience of significant others who were potential competitors' (Brown 1978: 31). This behaviour aligns closely with that of the model. The elite of this period maintained a strong set of invisible boundaries that circumscribed the aspirations of individuals and directed them into 'forms of achievement that could potentially be shared by all members in the peer group' (Brown 1978: 35). Moreover, the notion of limited good (explained immediately below) prevailed. Goods were there to be spent and not hoarded. Those who accumulated too much were cut down to size. Members of the elite could insure themselves against envy by lavishing funds on the polis, for example to maintain its cults.

Limited good

A factor which sharpens occasions of competition in Mediterranean society is the notion of 'the limited good'. In many cultures, absent the effects of the industrial and green revolutions, the notion of expanding production is unknown and, as a matter of fact, some societies in the past may have witnessed little growth in economic output (and it is doubtful, though possible, that there

was economic growth in the Roman empire in the first century CE – see Garnsey and Saller 1987: 51–63). In such a case, all goods are thought to exist in finite quantities and, often, are treated as indivisible, so that someone can accumulate a surplus of any good, including honour, only at the expense of someone else. In ancient Israel, Esau found that Isaac had only one blessing to give and it had gone to Jacob (Gen. 27:36–40). The idea was originally formulated in relation to Mexican peasants (Foster 1967; also cf. Malina 2001: 81–107), but it can be found in many other areas at an advanced agrarian stage of development. An honourable man does not try to build up a hoard of goods which may excite dangerous envy among his peers. Similarly, profiting from trade may be seen as theft. Instead, an honourable man strives to preserve what he has.

Applied to the competitions for honour which social equals enter into in Mediterranean culture (ancient and modern) in virtually any area of social interaction, a social dynamic called 'challenge-and-response', limited good means that there is only so much honour to be obtained in the exchange and that it will be a case of winner takes all.

Patron and client relations

A typical feature of Mediterranean culture is the existence of patron–client relations. These are social relationships between individuals based on a strong element of inequality and difference in power that permit the exchange of different and very unequal resources. Typically, a member of an urban elite will share some of his social, economic and political resources (including legal advice) to people lower on the social scale, who, in return, will give him expressions of loyalty and honour that are useful in one way or another (Moxnes 1991: 242). Often there will be a middle-man, a broker, who mediates the exchange of the various benefits between clients and a more powerful patron. The broker will function as a client to the ultimate patron and as patron to the ultimate clients (Moxnes 1991: 248–9).

Patron–broker–client relations are explicable as a way of overcoming the extremely stratified nature of Mediterranean society and the limited nature of its resources, but also of investing relationships with people who are not kin with some of the characteristics of the reciprocity and even emotional attachment which characterises the household. Thus we may regard patron–client relations as a form of fictive kinship.

When one turns to the ancient data, it is apparent that patron–client relations were a prominent feature of Roman life during both the Republic and the empire (Saller 1982). Members of the Republican elite, senators especially, had groups of clients whom they would receive at their home early in the morning. Perhaps the most interesting evidence for the centrality of patronage in the Republic is found in the text *Commentariolum Petitionis* (*Handbook of Electioneering*), which purports to be advice given to Marcus Tullius Cicero by his younger brother Quintus to help him win the election to consulship in 63 BCE. Much of this text is occupied with obtaining large numbers of 'friends' (a polite word as between patron and clients, since *cliens* was regarded as degrading – Garnsey and Saller 1987: 152) who will agitate on Cicero's behalf. Here is a small sample of the advice to Cicero:

> Inquire and seek out men everywhere, get to know them, pursue them, secure them, see that they canvass their localities for you and act like candidates on your behalf. They will want you as a friend if they see you are anxious for their friendship; pursue the object of making them understand the point by using discourse appropriate to the purpose. Small-town and country folk think themselves our friends if we know them by name; and if they think they are gaining some protection for themselves, they lose no opportunity of deserving it.
>
> *(8.31; Henderson 1989: 771–3)*

Or again:

> I am very anxious that you should always have a crowd about you; I think it important to the occasion. Further, it will bring you great credit and high prestige if you have around you those whom you have defended, who have been preserved and saved from condemnation by you. Demand of them plainly that since it is due to your unpaid efforts that they have retained their property, or their reputation, or their life and all their fortunes, and since there will never be another chance for them to thank you, they should repay you by this service.
>
> *(10.38; Henderson 1989: 777)*

Cameron (1991: 76) notes, however, that there were changes later; thus in the empire, when political office came largely through imperial patronage, individual members of the elite no longer had to appeal to the people for support. Yet this simply meant that patrons and clients chose other areas to cement their relationships, from the emperor down. Thus, as far as the emperors themselves went, Augustus set the pattern early by seeking to legitimise his reign by the traditional patterns of patronage and benefaction (Garnsey and Saller 1987: 149). He left an account of his reign, the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, largely extant on an inscription in Ankara (see Figure 1.9), much of which (chapters 15–24 out of 35) is taken up with an account of the staggering level of benefits and services he provided to the Roman people. Here is a sample:

> In the eighteenth year of my tribunician power and my twelfth consulship (5 BCE) I gave 240 sesterces apiece to 320,000 members of the urban plebs. In my fifth consulship (29 BCE) I gave 1,000 sesterces out of booty to every one of the colonists drawn from my soldiers; about 120,000 men in the colonies received this largesse at the time of my triumph.
>
> *(15.2–3; translation Brunt and Moore 1967: 25–7)*

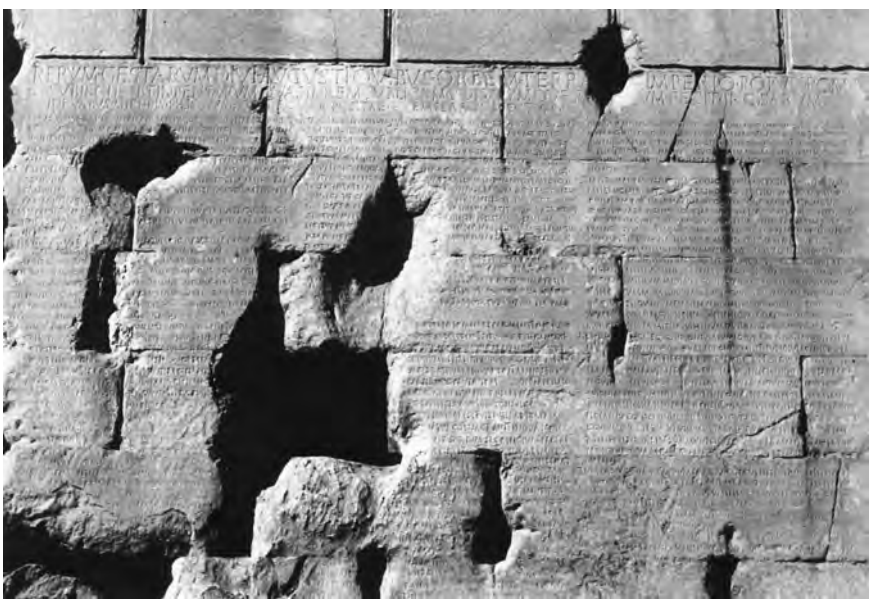

Figure 1.9 The *Res Gestae* of Augustus, in the Temple of Rome and Augustus, Ankara. Photo J. C. Coulston

Yet the whole system of keeping the Roman plebs fed and content on 'bread and circuses' illustrates the perennial nature of such support. Since the city population, given its huge number, could not repay such imperial gifts in any direct or specific way, Garnsey and Saller note that the reciprocity ethic demanded that they make a return in the form of deference, respect and loyalty (1987: 149). This is rather similar to the position taken by the author of the *Handbook on Electioneering* in the second of the two quotations given above.

The emperors became patrons to a large number of members of the elite, many of whom were charged with important roles in the administration of Rome or the provinces. Some of the rewards that went with such imperial preferment were used by their recipients to bestow patronage on others further down the social hierarchy. Provincial governors functioned as brokers between the local population and the empire. In other words, the emperor did not become a universal patron to the exclusion of other patrons, but rather worked within the traditional patterns to allow the aristocracy to continue to exercise patronal influence as they had always done (Garnsey and Saller 1987: 150).

It has been suggested by Millet that Athens was an exception to the rest of the region by not being characterised by patron–client relations on the basis that this sort of social arrangement was incompatible with Athenian democracy (1989). This seems rather unlikely, however, and the fact that Aristotle specifically speaks of unequal friendships (*Nicomachean Ethics* 8.14), which sound very much like patronage, suggests we should be cautious in denying this social feature to Athens. The lack of a specific language of patronage at Athens parallel to what we have from Rome does not mean that patron–client relations did not exist there.

There is evidence in the New Testament for how this system worked at the local level in Palestine in the story of the centurion of Caphernaum with a sick servant told by Luke (7:1–10). He is able to send Jewish elders to plead with Jesus, so that they act as his clients. They tell Jesus that 'He deserves this of you because he is friendly towards our people; in fact he is the one who built our synagogue' (Luke 7:5). Tricia Gates Brown has persuasively accounted for the role of the Spirit in John's Gospel and 1 John in terms of patron–broker–client relations (Brown 2003).

After Christianity became a legitimate religion with the Edict of Milan in 313 CE, bishops with family wealth behind them, such as Ambrose, continued to operate within the ancient framework of patronage and benefaction, for example by paying for the construction of churches (see Chapter 57 of this work).

Conclusion

The discussion above justifies us treating the Mediterranean region as having, at least at a reasonably high level of abstraction, an ensemble of distinctive natural and cultural features that left their mark on early Christianity in a wide variety of ways which will emerge in many of the essays of this work. None of this means that we should underestimate the huge variety of social features across the region nor our considerable ignorance in many areas; Cameron notes that even on something as fundamental as the shape of urban life, 'We remain very much in the dark about the social composition of most cities' (1991: 45).

Neither should we forget, as noted at the start of this chapter, that the relationship between a religion and its social setting is a dialectical one, with setting influencing religious life and beliefs, while the latter can have a profound impact on the setting. As Cameron, again, has noted, looking at the way things developed to Constantine and beyond, Christianity and the empire affected one another – it was a dynamic process in which both sides were changing (1991: 4). Christianity 'placed an extraordinary premium on verbal formulation' and this led to an attempt, largely successful, to impose an authority of discourse which itself came to be the dominant one in the state. Thus the story of the development of Christian discourse forms part of political history (1991: 19).

In the end, however, any attempt to understand early Christianity apart from the unique cultural context of the ancient Mediterranean in which it was born will lead to a misleading and emaciated

form of intellectual history, dangerously divorced from the realities of human experience. 'The Word was made flesh', wrote the Fourth Evangelist, thus provoking or at least enriching centuries of speculation as to the nature of Christ, before adding a clause which is generally given far less attention: 'and dwelt amongst us' (John 1:14). Thus, the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel recognises that the heart of Christian existence is not simply a statement about the nature of Christ *in abstracto*, but rather an affirmation that this reality found its embodiment within the natural and cultural aspects of everyday Mediterranean society. Even one of the most exalted theological passages in the New Testament strongly encourages us to pay these features our closest attention.

Notes

1 The terms 'Christian' and 'Christianity' are anachronistic for at least the early part of this period, until the end of the first century CE and even for some time beyond. Not only was the word *Christianos* (which appears only three times in the New Testament and on each occasion as an outsider designation: Acts 11:26 and 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16) not used by those who followed Christ as a term of self-designation until later, but 'Christian' conveys such particular associations from the later course of the movement as to obscure important aspects of its rather fluid and developing identity at this early time. For the first century CE, 'Christ-movement' and 'Christ-follower' are helpful alternatives for Christianity and Christian, but other expressions are also used.
2 As already noted, the coastline of Europe is about 13,000 km, whereas that of Africa is 5,000 km and Asia 6,000 km (Semple 1932: 5–7).
3 Herodotus did not dispute a flat earth, but argued against Europe, Asia and Libya being the same size and professed ignorance as to whether Europe was surrounded by sea.
4 On the use of models in the analysis of ancient social phenomena, see Esler 1987: 6–16, 1995b: 4–8; Elliott 1995: 36–59.
5 A detailed account of the way Garnsey's views on this subject (1998b, but originally published in 1974) have been received is provided in the addendum by Walter Schiedel at pp. 24–7 of this essay.
6 One should also include here ex-colonial offshoots of these cultures, such as Australia and New Zealand.

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2

ARMIES, EMPERORS AND BUREAUCRATS

Jill Harries

In 417 CE, the Spanish Christian Orosius recalled, in his *History Against the Pagans*, how Christ came into a Roman world united and at peace:

> In the whole world there was one peace among all, not because of the cessation of wars, but because of their abolition . . . that first and greatest census was taken, since in this one name of Caesar all the peoples of the great nations took oath, and at the same time, through participation in the census, were made part of one society.
>
> *(Orosius, 7.2; Deferrari 1964 trans.: 287)*

Writing at a time when Christianity had triumphed over its religious competitors to become the dominant religion of the Roman empire, Orosius was aware, as a citizen of the empire himself, that the character of that empire, its unity, its stability for much of its history, and its institutions had had a large part to play in its success. This chapter is about the armies, who defended and policed the empire, the emperors, who were, on occasion, persecutors and, after Constantine (r. 306–337), promoters of the Christian faith, and the administrators who ran a system that was, by modern standards, amateur, yet surprisingly effective.

Although Roman power depended for its daily functioning on the consent of the elite among the governed, military force remained the ultimate deterrent against revolt. Nowhere was that more clearly shown than in the fate, which befell what was, by imperial standards, an obscure city on the edge of empire – Jerusalem. For four years (66–70 CE), the Jewish people revolted from their Roman masters (Berlin and Overman 2002). In 70, the emperor's son, Titus, took the city of the apostles, and their fellow-Jews experienced the consequences of their disobedience:

> The army having no victims either for slaughter or plunder, through lack of all objects on which to vent their rage . . . Caesar ordered the whole city and the temple to be razed to the ground, leaving only the loftiest of the towers . . . All the rest of the wall encompassing the city was so completely levelled with the ground as to leave future visitors to the spot no ground for believing it had ever been inhabited.
>
> *(Josephus,* JW *7.1.1; Thackeray 1928 trans.: 505)*

Figure 2.1 Coin depicting the 71 CE triumph of Vespasian celebrating the defeat of the Jews. Copyright the University of St Andrews

Rebel prisoners, too, suffered punishment that was both painful and public. At games held in honour of his brother, Domitian's, birthday, 2,500 Jewish captives were killed by wild beasts in the arena, burned alive or forced to fight to the death as gladiators for the entertainment of the public (Josephus, *JW* 7.3.1). Others, including the ring-leaders of the rebellion, were preserved to adorn the joint triumph of Vespasian and Titus at Rome in 71 CE.

Although revolts from the ruling power were rare, the exemplary case of Judea was a reminder of the base on which Roman power ultimately rested, that of armed force and, if necessary, coercion based on terror. Although the bulk of the Roman world was at peace for the first two centuries CE and the visible presence of the armed forces was limited, apart from in the frontier areas, the military origins of the Roman state were never forgotten. Military vocabulary, such as the word *militia*, which meant both armed and administrative service, applied in both civil and military contexts. Even Plutarch (*c.* 45–*c.* 120 CE), meditating on the histories of Greece and Rome in peaceful Chaeronea, was aware of the underlying realities of life under Roman rule: 'do not have great pride or confidence in your crown, for you see the soldier's boot just above your head' (*Precepts of Statecraft* 17).

The armies

Armies and empire

Most Roman legions were stationed on the frontiers of the empire. In mainland Europe, the main frontiers were the Rhine and the Danube. In the east, the wide lands between Roman Syria and the great Parthian empire, with their rich mix of cultures and peoples, formed a zone within which the two great powers struggled, expensively and indecisively, for dominance. To the south, Roman North Africa was occasionally disrupted by raids by sub-Saharan peoples. Elsewhere in the empire, smaller forces were stationed for garrison duty and to deal with local emergencies; responsibility for routine policing was shared with city administrations (Fuhrmann 2011).

Emperors were commanders-in-chief of the armed forces (Campbell 1983). Under the Republic, military glory had been the main passport to political success and, despite Augustus' advice to his successors that the empire should remain within its existing boundaries, this convention would still apply to emperors. Even the unwarlike Claudius I (r. 41–54 CE), accepted his military obligations, with his launch of his conquest of Britain in 43 CE. However, the Spanish-born Trajan (r. 98–117 CE), who rose through

a military career to be adopted as his heir by Nerva (r. 96–98 CE), was the most spectacularly aggressive expander of the Roman empire since Augustus: two wars in Dacia (roughly modern Romania), which were to be commemorated in Trajan's Column at Rome, resulted in the annexation of that area as a new province in 106, and, at the time of his death in 117, he was dealing with the adverse effects of his attempt to expand the Roman empire eastwards beyond the Euphrates into Mesopotamia.

Trajan's successor, Hadrian (r. 117–138 CE), however, signalled a change in policy. Having abandoned Trajan's eastern conquests, he engaged in no further expansion. However, he did travel more extensively in the Roman empire than had any of his predecessors, visiting armies en route and, we are told, participating in their austere lifestyle (Historia Augusta, *Life of Hadrian* 10); the emperor remained a soldier, but not a conqueror. Not surprisingly, the physical presence of the emperor encouraged local initiatives; Hadrian's Wall, built in the 120s in Britain, was the material consequence of the imperial presence in that remote corner of the Roman world. His example established that glory was no longer a prerequisite for success, a lesson well learned by his sedentary successor, Antoninus Pius (r. 138–161 CE), who hardly ever left Rome.

By the later second century, however, military involvement on the part of an emperor was no longer a matter only of his choice. Faced with serious military pressures on the Danube frontier, Marcus Aurelius (r. 161–180 CE), whose natural bent was for Stoic philosophy, felt obliged to spend long periods in camp (although his son and successor, Commodus (r. 176–192 CE), got away with a

Figure 2.2 Roman army from Trajan's column in Rome, showing emperor, standards and army. Photo J. C. N. Coulston

patched-up peace and a return to Rome in 180). Further military activity in Britain (206–211) and against the Parthians took place under Septimius Severus (r. 193–211) and his successors. In the 230s, however, a development with ominous implications for Rome occurred in Parthia, with the accession of the new, aggressive Sassanian dynasty in what now became, again, Persia. Pledged to renew the glories of the ancient empire of Cyrus the Great, the new Persian kings adopted a policy of active, albeit sporadic, hostility towards their Roman neighbours (sources in Dodgeon and Lieu 1991). For several centuries, the fortunes of war continued to fluctuate. The Roman emperor, Valerian, was defeated and captured by Shapur I in 260. In 298, the tables were turned by the Caesar Galerius, who forced a humiliating treaty on the Persians. Late in his reign, Constantine sought to expand his empire yet further east – on the grounds that Persia was persecuting his Christians – but died before achieving anything. Intermittent warfare and sieges persisted for much of the fourth century. When, however, the invasion of Persia led by the last pagan emperor, Julian, proved a spectacular failure, resulting in his death in 363, Christian writers took gleeful note of this apparent failure of the pagan gods to protect their own (Lieu and Lieu 1986: 91–134).

Emperors made by armies

The Roman armies had also an occasional, but crucial, political role in the determination of the imperial succession. Augustus (r. 30 BCE–14 CE) became Rome's first *de facto* sole ruler after a series of civil wars, culminating in his victory over Mark Antony; his successor Tiberius (r. 14–37 CE) had a long and successive military career prior to his accession. For emperors who were proclaimed at Rome, the support, or at least the acquiescence, of the elite corps, the praetorian guard, was essential. This was true of Tiberius' successor, Gaius Caligula (r. 37–41 CE), who relied on the backing of Macro, commander of the guard, in 37; of Claudius I, who was proclaimed by the guard, in defiance of the Senate, in 41; and of Nero (r. 54–68 CE) in 54. However, experience was to show that the power of the Praetorians was limited if their preferred candidate lacked appeal to the armies of the frontiers. When the Praetorians sought to impose their own man, Otho, on the empire in 68, they failed; Otho was overthrown by the armies of the north under Vitellius (who in his turn was supplanted by Vespasian). In 193, the Praetorians, having murdered the previous emperor, put the empire up for auction between two rival candidates (Dio, *Roman History Epitome* 74.11). The 'winner', that is the man who promised the highest donative, was to last a mere 66 days, before being overthrown, again by a northern army, this time under the ultimately successful pretender, Septimius Severus. The praetorian guard was finally disbanded by Constantine, after his takeover of Rome in 312.

The events of the years 68–69, known as the 'Year of the Four Emperors', revealed, as Tacitus observed (*Histories* 1.4), that emperors could be made elsewhere than in Rome. It also revealed the potentially catastrophic effects for the whole empire of a disputed succession as the Roman legions of the Rhine under Vitellius, the Danube (under Antonius Primus, who declared for Vespasian) and of Syria became embroiled in a war of Roman against Roman. This costly experience was not to be repeated for over 120 years, although crisis did loom again in 96, after Domitian's assassination left a vacancy with no obvious heir. Disaster was averted by the Senate's nomination of the pacific Nerva and his subsequent, (perhaps forced) adoption of Trajan. However, in 193, the death of Commodus without issue triggered a more prolonged period of civil war, as Septimius Severus, governor of Pannonia, fought it out in the east with the governors of Syria (194–195) and Britain (196–197). Being a usurper, Septimius' position required legitimation through further military victories, hence a successful attack on Parthia in 197–198. But he had also to do more to win and retain the favour of the legions: substantial increases in pay ensued and the abolition of the anachronistic rules forbidding soldiers to marry. His son, Antoninus Caracalla (r. 211–217), took the militarisation of the administration further, by adopting a soldier's lifestyle and gratuitously snubbing his non-military senatorial advisers (Dio 78.17.3).

The poorly documented third century was a period of imperial and military instability (Potter 2004). Pressures on all the frontiers strained Roman military capabilities and rendered the job of

emperor strenuous and often untenable. The inability of successive emperors to impose themselves on the whole empire or establish stable dynasties allowed army candidates to bid for local or pan-imperial power virtually at will. From a distance, the picture seems one of chaos, with emperors achieving reigns of, on average, less than two years. But this picture is misleading. Although the turnover of emperors was high, they came often from the same military milieu, and formed, unofficially, a college of generals (Syme 1971: 194–200), whose combined efforts countered the military threats from the east and central Europe and prevented the threatened fragmentation of the whole imperial structure. Second, the enthusiasm of local armies for local, unauthorised generals should not be ascribed only, or even mainly, to self-serving irresponsibility on the part of the soldiers or the communities they were charged to defend. Irruptions of alien peoples across vulnerable frontiers put pressure on local leaders to find local emperors to give themselves the operational efficiency and boost to morale produced by having an emperor on the spot. Thus, for example, in 260, the Gallic armies proclaimed one Postumus as Augustus. So effective was he that his 'Gallic Empire' lasted, under himself and his successors, for 14 years, until its reintegration into the Roman empire by Aurelian.

For much of the fourth century, emperors remained overtly military in character and the style of their rule. In 284, Diocletian (r. 284–305), having publicly murdered or defeated in battle several rivals, inaugurated a period of comparative stability; he and his colleagues campaigned regularly on the European frontiers and, with spectacular success, against Persia. Constantine asserted his rights as heir to his father, Constantius I, through his proclamation by the army at York in 306 (Hartley 2006; Barnes 2011: 62–6). In 324–325, Constantine won control of the eastern empire by defeating his last surviving rival, Licinius, and became the empire's sole Augustus for the next 12 years.

On the death of Constantine in May 337, the smooth succession of his three surviving sons was assured only by the prompt massacre of other family members in Constantinople. In 360, however, Julian, the so-called 'Apostate', the younger son of one of the murdered claimants, was himself proclaimed Augustus by the Gallic army in Paris. After Julian's death in Persia in 363, the eastern army in its turn successfully asserted its right of choice of emperor, with the selection of Valentinian I, who was acceptable in the west because he had also served previously in Gaul. The most serious challenges to central authority emanated from Gaul and Britain: Magnentius, ruler of the west from 350, was suppressed after three years in 353, the Spanish-born Magnus Maximus survived as Augustus of Gaul, Spain and Britain for five years (383–388) before his overthrow by Theodosius I at Aquileia in northern Italy, and a plethora of usurpers from Britain added to the mayhem in the western empire in the first decade of the fifth century. From *c.* 400 onwards, unstable coalitions of 'barbarian' federates, often no more than nominally in Roman service and always with their own agendas, would increasingly dominate both the military and the political landscape of the western empire.

A soldier's life

For the first two centuries CE, the structure of the Roman army was based on legions, nominally consisting of 6,000 men, divided into cohorts and centuries; the first-ranked centurion had the title of 'primi pili'. Their job description consisted of more than just fighting, forced marches or building fortified camps every night; Roman soldiers were also the builders of the Roman roads and were directed by highly skilled army surveyors, whose expertise could also be translated to civilian life. From the late third century, Diocletian and Constantine worked to establish two distinct types of military organisation (although the personnel could overlap). Frontier forces, or *limitanei*, were settled more or less permanently on frontier lands to act as forward lines in the event of invasions; this loose form of organisation could include non-Roman peoples, like the Franks, settled by treaty and known as federates, who would also provide soldiers and even generals for Rome. Alone, however, they could not be expected to contain a major threat. This was the job of the soldiers in the central striking forces, the *comitatenses*, which had started to evolve by the mid third century, and perhaps earlier. These were commanded by the emperor in person or a chief general, and could move swiftly to deal

Figure 2.3 Fresco of a soldier in the Via Latina Catacomb in Rome, mid fourth century CE; Photo J. C. N. Coulston

with crises. At the same time, the civil administration was gradually separated from the military, with the creation of 'masters of the horse/foot', and of *duces* ('leaders') with military spheres of command often taking in more than one province.

The rewards for soldiers were substantial. In the first century, the Roman citizenship was a desired proof of status, and Claudius I established a procedure of issuing diplomas to serving auxiliaries, confirming their citizenship and other privileges. Although they were not allowed legally to marry, soldiers whose units became settled in one area acquired unofficial households and children, whose inheritance could be safeguarded by special testamentary provisions. Given the uncertainties of a solder's life, it also made sense to allow soldiers exemption from most legal formalities in the making of a will, although it was stipulated that oral requests had to be properly witnessed (*Digest* 29.1.24) and that an unwritten indication of intention was valid only if the soldier died while on service or within a year of his discharge (Ulpian, *Tituli* 23.10). Soldiers were outside – or above – civilian legal procedure. They had the right to have their cases heard by their own military courts, and civilians in dispute with soldiers were obliged to conform to military justice. Higher ranking soldiers might also find themselves acting as solvers of disputes in the local community. On discharge, veterans were rewarded by the state with money or land. They could receive the right of *conubium*, which meant that their children, even by a non-citizen mother, would be Roman citizens.

They were also immune from some taxes and were not liable to punishments inflicted on the lower classes, the *humiliores*. Glory and reputation were all-important, hence the emphasis placed on military decorations, such as the civic crown (*corona civica*), for being first over a defended wall. So after the fall of Jerusalem in 70, Titus issued the expected rewards:

> Calling up each by name he applauded them as they came forward . . . He then placed crowns of gold upon their heads, presented them with golden neck-chains, little golden spears and standards made of silver and promoted each man to a higher rank; he further assigned to them out of the spoils silver and gold and raiments and other booty in abundance.
>
> *(Josephus,* JW *7.1.3; Thackeray 1928 trans.: 509)*

Despite all these forms of recognition of their importance, the life of a Roman soldier was often hard and always strenuous. Recruits were taught to march fast, at an average speed of four miles an hour (in summer) over five hours, rising to nearly five miles per hour with 'the fuller step' (Vegetius, 1.9). They were also trained to jump, climb, swim and carry a load of up to sixty pounds, as well as perform weapons drill. Punishments for indiscipline and, especially cowardice, were harsh; in the most extreme cases, one in ten of a failed unit could be executed ('decimation'). In 14 CE the insecurity of the new emperor Tiberius encouraged the armies of Pannonia and the Rhine to plead for better conditions:

> [o]ld men, several of them with their bodies disfigured by wounds, were serving their thirtieth or fortieth year. There was no end to military service even when they were discharged, as they remained under the standards and performed the same tasks under another name. If any survived all these dangers, he was dragged off to a far away country, where he received a so-called plot of land that was in fact waterlogged marshes or uncultivated mountainsides. Indeed, military service was unremitting and unprofitable.
>
> *(Tacitus,* Annals *1.17; Campbell 1994: 20)*

Soldiers who ran away, disobeyed orders, passed information to the enemy, or pretended to be ill to avoid having to fight could expect public torture and execution 'in full view of the soldiers, as an example' (Menander, *On Military Matters* III). The same fate awaited those who renounced their oath of allegiance. This category could include Christians, although it is not clear how far Christian recruits could have reconciled their principles over religious rites and sacrifices with the cultic observances required in army life. In 298, at Tingis in Mauretania, the Christian centurion Marcellus was executed with the sword for 'publicly renouncing his oath of allegiance and having, moreover, put on the record statements full of madness' (*Acts of Marcellus* 5; Musurillo 1972: 250–9). But, although the army was to be substantially Christianised in the course of the fourth century, few seem to have been put off the career by the Christian horror of shedding blood.

Emperors

The system of one-man rule over the whole Roman empire was created by Augustus; the name 'Augustus' was adopted as a title by all subsequent emperors. Augustus' constitutional position was based on his simultaneous holding of the powers of several of the traditional offices of the Roman *res publica*. The most important of these was the consulship; the consular *imperium*, which extended beyond the consul's year of office, enabled the emperor to retain through his legates command of the most militarised of the provinces (mainly Gaul/Germany, various Danubian provinces and Syria). In addition, the power of the tribunate of the people (*tribunicia potestas*) enabled Augustus and his successors to depict themselves as acting with the authority, or in place of, the sovereign people. By virtue of his *imperium*, the emperor had control of foreign policy, because diplomatic strategies aimed at containing threats from outside the empire could be backed with armed force where necessary.

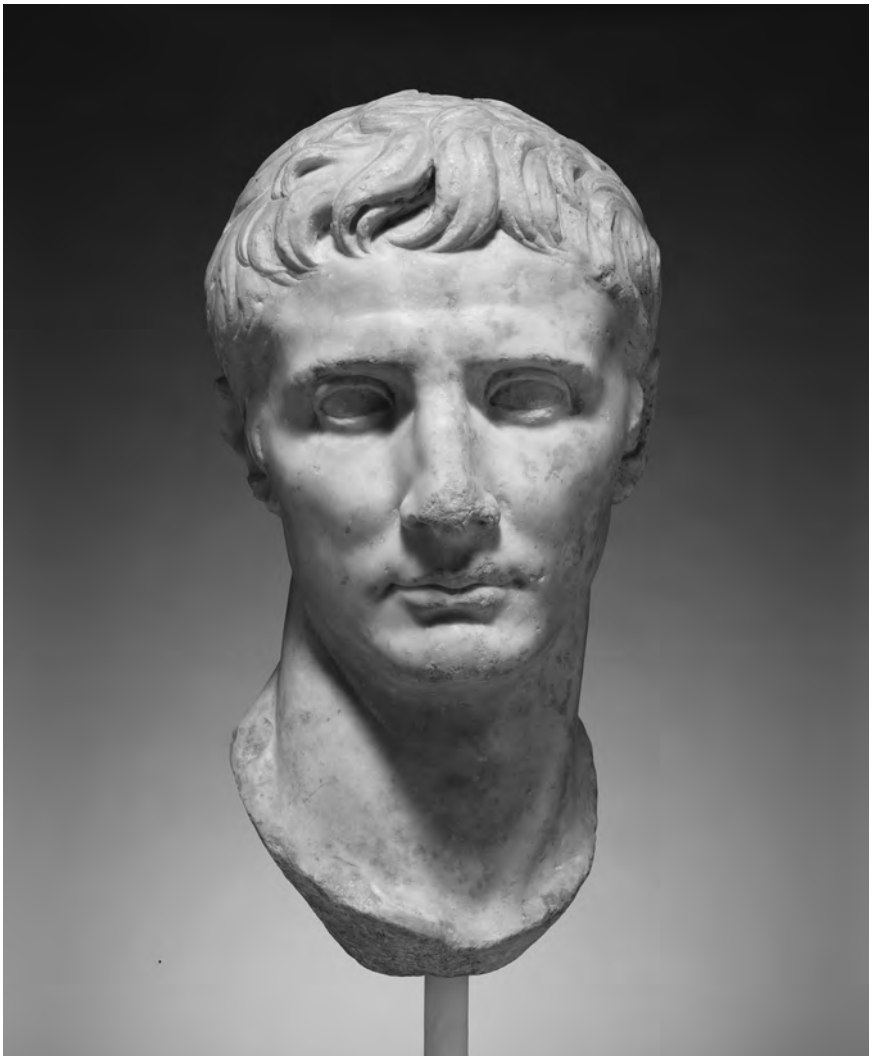

Figure 2.4 Portrait head of Augustus, 25–1 BCE; Courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum; object number 78.AA.261

As the soldiers' paymaster, the emperor also had overall charge of taxation; a new military treasury was set up in 6 CE, funded by the proceeds of an inheritance tax. Hence, too, the (probably non-existent) census reported by Luke (2.1–3) decreed by Caesar Augustus, 'when Quirinus was governor of Syria'. In addition, the emperor derived powers to patronise and bring relief to hard-pressed petitioners from his huge personal wealth, which tended to become confused with the public finances, despite the existence of separate treasuries (the public *aerarium* and the *fiscus*).

Although much was to change in the style and manner in which imperial powers were exercised, their basic structure remained remarkably consistent. Thus, in the area of finance, emperors in the fourth and fifth centuries could still produce radical reform of the taxation system. Diocletian, for example, regularised the assessment of taxation under the two headings of the *iugum*, based on land, or the produce of land, and the *caput*, based on living things, including animals as well as people, while still retaining an element of local flexibility as revenue-raising systems in the Roman empire had always done. In the honour-oriented society of the Roman empire (see Chapter 1, this volume,

and Lendon 1997), it is no surprise that military glory also remained a priority for fourth-century emperors, and the theme continued into the Byzantine empire. However, some of the more pacific emperors of the fifth century laid greater emphasis on Christian piety than war, preferring to achieve their victories (if any) through others.

The administration of the late empire was very different from the system established by Augustus. Under the Republic, Rome and the provinces had been run by magistrates using methods similar to those used in regulating their own households. Governors and other magistrates, like fathers of families, relied on an advisory council, *consilium*. Following this practice, Augustus established a similar advisory council, consisting largely of senior senators (Crook 1955). His successors followed his lead, but the composition of the council changed over time and, by the third century, had become more overtly military, with precedence being given to the praetorian prefects in preference to senators. The *consilium*, renamed the consistorium, was formalised in the fourth century and consisted of various heads of civil service departments, provincial supremos and generals, along with special advisers, whose status was advertised through their designation as *comites consistoriani*.

Over time, the administration centred on the emperor himself also became more formalised. From Augustus onwards, new recruits, often for newly created posts, were drawn from the non-political wealthy and educated elite, the *equites*; equestrian offices included the highly sensitive posts of prefect of the praetorian guard and prefect of the emperor's personal province, Egypt. Unlike members of the Roman Senate, *equites* cannot be described as a class with any distinctive political identity or agenda of their own. They were attractive imperial servants because their wealth, education and social status, in conjunction with their complete dependence on the emperor's patronage, made them both loyal (as a rule) and socially acceptable to the elites in the empire as a whole with whom they had to deal. By the second century, *equites* were established in all the main branches of government. Finance was especially important: equestrian procurators ran the imperial estates, which included other commercial ventures such as mining, all over the provinces, and governors were advised to keep out of their way. Imperial wealth was enhanced by periodic confiscations of property from traitors, rebels and other criminals condemned on capital charges, notably by Septimius Severus, who appointed specific officials to handle the proceeds after the civil wars of 193–197, as well as by taxation receipts.

Imperial women

Republican notables had expected to run their households and, specifically, their correspondence, with the help of their *familia*, which meant both family and household, including slaves and freedmen (Weaver 1972). Early emperors relied heavily on family, retainers and friends, not always to their advantage. Claudius was allegedly too much influenced by his various wives and freedmen, who exploited his absent-mindedness and poor eyesight. With supreme power came a court culture of intrigue (Spawforth 2007: 121–232), especially over the imperial succession. Augustus' wife, Livia, was accused of engineering the succession for her son, Tiberius; Agrippina, Claudius' wife, perhaps poisoned her husband to ensure the succession for her son, Nero; and in 117, Plotina, Trajan's wife was suspected of fixing the succession for her favourite, Hadrian. Imperial security depended on the reliability of the domestic staff; both Domitian in 96 and Commodus in 192 were the victims of plots organised and carried out by members of the imperial household. In late antiquity too, those intimately involved with the emperor's well-being, such as palace eunuchs, were suspected of running government behind the scenes (Tougher 2002).

Romans understood that power comes in many forms and their words for power (*potentia*, the ability to get things done) acknowledged that fact: *imperium* (right of command), *potestas* (legal power), *auctoritas* (authority) and *gratia* (influence). No woman could hold imperial office, command an army or pass a law. Neither was it acceptable that she attend councils of state. This limited the amount of official power that women could wield in the imperial system. Nevertheless, there were widespread

perceptions that imperial women could 'get things done'. Emperors did not rule in isolation from their families or dynasty. The Julio-Claudian dynasty, down to 68, was held together by a line of succession that ran from Augustus from mother to daughter. Empresses received public honours: for example, at the end of the second century, Septimius Severus designated his Syrian wife, Julia Domna, the 'mother of the camp'. After Severus' death in 211, Julia, a respected intellectual in her own right, retained power and influence through her son, Caracalla who, unusually, allowed her to answer petitions on his behalf and the Severan dynasty thereafter was perpetuated through women down to 235 (Levick 2007).

With the rise of Christianity, imperial women acquired a new prominence: Constantine's mother, Helena, was his representative at Rome from 312 and an active patron of Christian sites in both Rome and the Holy Land; her daughter, Constantina, patronised the cult of St Agnes in Rome in the 340s (Harries 2014). The accession of child-emperors (McEvoy 2013) permitted the exercise of extraordinary influence by Justina, the Arian mother of Valentinian II (and opponent of Ambrose of Milan), in the 380s and of Galla Placidia, mother of Valentinian III, from 425 (Sivan 2011). In Constantinople, Eudoxia, the empress of Arcadius (395–408), feuded bitterly with the bishop, John Chrysostom, and her daughters, headed by the ostentatiously virginal Pulcheria, gave to the court of their little brother, Theodosius II, a perhaps oppressively devout 'monastic' quality.

Perceptions of empresses, especially in the eastern part of the empire, as having independent power were conditioned by honours previously paid to Hellenistic queens. Because of the suspicions of the male-dominated sources concerning over-powerful women, assertions of petticoat government abound whenever the emperor appeared weak or lacking in dynamic ideas or policies of his own. In fact, court politics were always more complicated. Imperial women, with their privileged access to the male controllers of formal power, were well placed to affect the workings of government, create informal alliances with other courtiers and assist their clients. They had access to 'authority' and 'influence', therefore, even when formally limited as to what they could achieve (Holum 1983 but, on Pulcheria and Theodosius II, see Harries 2013).

The imperial image

Augustus' effectiveness derived in part from his appreciation of the constitutional sensibilities of both allies and opponents. Reassurance could be given to all constituencies through the continuing use of familiar terminologies of power. In 27 BCE, Augustus had 'transferred the republic from my dominion to that of the Senate and People of Rome' (Augustus, *Res Gestae* 34.1, Brunt and Moore 1988), and had received back the imperial provinces and other powers, ostensibly by free consent of the Senate; his immediate successors were accorded formal recognition by the Senate through a special statute defining their *imperium*. The notion prevalent in the first century that the Senate at Rome should, at least nominally, choose the emperor was still operative at Rome as late as 455, when the Senate chose one of its own number to replace a recently assassinated (and controversial) incumbent. The outward expression of imperial power, even in the late antique and Byzantine periods, also acknowledged, selectively, some sense of accountability to the people (Kaldellis 2015). Emperors who visited Rome to pay their respects to the symbolic capital of the world, as Constantius II did in 357, were expected to attend public entertainments and exchange pleasantries with the crowd:

> when he presented equestrian games, he enjoyed the witticisms of the plebs, who were neither arrogant nor did they fall short of their traditional freedom, while he too respectfully preserved the proper moderation.
>
> *(Ammianus Marcellinus, History 16.10.13, author's trans.)*

Despite well-advertised instances of respect for tradition, however, the representation of the emperor changed dramatically between the first and the fourth centuries. From Augustus onwards, Roman

imperial art communicated an image of the world which placed the emperor and the state at the centre (Zanker 1988). The successors of Augustus responded in different ways to the pressures on them to conform to a quasi-divine image of imperial rule which took its origins from the habit, well-established in Greek Eastern cities, of offering cult to rulers, be they Hellenistic kings or Roman magistrates. Tiberius was cautious, as was Claudius, but the short-lived and possibly mad Gaius Caligula expected to be worshipped as a god and castigated an unfortunate Jewish embassy for making offerings *for* him, rather than *to* him. The omnipresent imperial cult acted as a two-way means of communication, of loyalty from the subjects and of favour on the part of the emperor (Price 1984). Regular celebrations of birthdays and other anniversaries reinforced perceptions of emperors as members of families and dynasties and aimed to promote a sense of unity throughout a highly diverse Roman world. With the deference to local usages characteristic of much of Rome's dealings, the imperial cult was often skilfully imbedded in existing cultic practices (Rives 1995). It was also durable: the Hispellum rescript from Italy in the 330s shows that Christian emperors continued to receive cult (provided blood sacrifice and 'superstition' were avoided).

By the fourth century, the increasingly overt exercise of autocratic rule by emperors was paralleled by the evolution of an ornate court language, indulged in by panegyricists and combined with an ever more elaborate use of ceremonial. It had been normal practice to greet a visiting dignitary with a formal welcoming ceremony – governors had even to be warned not to show boredom during the requisite oration by the local public orator (Ulpian, *On the Duties of a Governor 1*). By the late third century, the *adventus*, state arrival, of an emperor was an occasion for ostentatious advertisement of his virtues (MacCormack 1972), even of his divinity:

> Now . . . when from each summit of the Alps, your deity first shone forth, a clearer light spread over all Italy; wonder seized upon all who gazed up . . . But when you came closer and closer and people began to recognise you, all the fields were filled . . . altars were ignited, incense placed upon them, libations of wine were poured, sacrificial victims slain . . . to the immortal gods praises and thanks were sung; they invoked not the god transmitted by conjecture but a visible and present Jupiter near at hand, they adored Hercules not as the stranger but as the emperor.
>
> *(*Latin panegyrics *XI. 10.4–5; Nixon and Rodgers 1994: 95)*

However, even in these formal settings, communication between emperor and subject was two-way. Imperial panegyricists, while dutifully transmitting what they were expected to say, also reflected the expectations of their audience and hoped for some return for their services. Similarly, the ceremony of *adoratio*, the kissing of the purple, instituted by Diocletian, although criticised at the time as evidence of oriental absolutism, enabled the emperor to show favour to a subject, as well as allowing the subject to pay homage to the emperor. In this curious fashion, the quasi-divine status of the emperor was fused with the more traditional notions of accessibility, which had characterised the Republican-style *princeps*.

Emperors and law

Imperial law-making, even in late antiquity, reflected traditional, long-standing legislative practices and precedents; as late as the 530s, Justinian saw Roman legal history as a continuum, stretching back to the time of Romulus, the first king (*Constitutio Deo Auctore* 1). Emperors, as magistrates, were entitled to issue edicts of general application and instructions (*mandata*) or letters (*epistulae*) to their legates in the provinces (Millar 1977: 314–21). Responses to legal queries by individuals as well as officials or representatives of cities were also known as *rescripta*, replies, or *subscripta*, notes at the foot of a document. By the early fourth century, edicts and *epistulae*, along with rescripts, had become the main sources of imperial law. However, problems over both the status (whether of

general application or not) and the provenance (by possibly corrupt means) of rescripts led to their sidelining by the early fifth century. Instead, emperors and their administrators tried to impose order on the system by resorting to more refined concepts of 'edictal' or 'general laws' (Justinianic Code 1.14.3, of 426). In 438, Theodosius II issued his attempt at a general codification of imperial law, the Theodosian Code (Matthews 2000). This included, in Book 16, a collection of imperial laws issued by emperors from Constantine onwards on a subject which had never before been formally recognised as a distinct category of law – Christianity.

Much binding imperial regulation was issued on an ad hoc basis, in reply to questions or proposals from officials or members of provincial elites (including bishops). This guaranteed, to a point, that the law would work, as it was in someone's interest that it be implemented or enforced. However, this, plus the absence of organised archives and the propensity of some governors to make unauthorised decisions, creating precedents of dubious validity, meant that the precise law on any matter at any particular time could be hard to ascertain.

This state of confusion may partly explain why persecution of Christians was accepted by Pliny in *c.* 112 and his imperial boss, Trajan, as legal fact, although Pliny does not seem to have known why this was the case. It was clear, however, to both Trajan and, later, Hadrian that an accused Christian was entitled to the same legal safeguards as was anyone else in the Roman empire. Denunciations were to be acted on, but Christians were not to be hounded by the authorities; if those denounced sacrificed, they were to be let off, as they clearly were not Christians (who, by definition, would refuse to sacrifice); and anonymous denunciations were prohibited (Pliny, *Letters* 10.96–97; cf. Hadrian's rescript to Minucius Fundanus, cited Justin, *Apologia* 1.69 and Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.9). Although the safeguards were not always operated in practice, their existence is an important reminder of the emperor's role as the ultimate guardian of law and order.

In late antiquity, Christian emperors, who in general acted as patrons of the Church giving both material goods and administrative support, also acquired a new role as active legislators on 'right religion'. Whereas pagan emperors before Constantine had tolerated most religions, provided they avoided atheism, treason or other forms of criminal activity such as human sacrifice (all charges made against Christians), Constantine and his successors found themselves under increasing pressure to legislate on behalf of Christianity and against religious competitors. Although pagans were slow to recognise the threat (Watts 2015), subsidies for public pagan cults were removed, sacrifices were outlawed, some temples were closed and, by the end of the fourth century, practising pagans were (in theory) debarred from high office. At the same time, 'right religion' was defined by Theodosius I (r. 379–395) in terms of the views held by named prominent churchmen:

> It is our will that all the peoples who are ruled by the administration of Our Clemency shall practise that religion which the divine Peter the Apostle transmitted to the Romans, as the religion which he introduced makes clear even unto this day. It is evident that this is the religion that is followed by the Pontiff Damasus (Bishop of Rome AD 367–384) and by Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic sanctity . . .
>
> (1) We command that those persons who follow this rule shall embrace the name of Catholic Christians. The rest, however, whom we adjudge demented and insane, shall sustain the infamy of heretical dogmas, their meeting places shall not receive the name of churches and they shall be smitten first by divine vengeance and secondly by the retribution of our own initiative.
>
> *(*Theodosian Code *16.2.1; Pharr 1952 trans.)*

This was reinforced by savage laws, issued against heretics such as the Manichaeans, the Macedonians and the Eunomians, whose meetings were forbidden and who were made subject to various legal disabilities (*Theodosian Code* 16.5.1–65). These enactments did not stop sacrifices or prevent continued

activity by heretics (who would never recognise themselves as such), but they signalled the emperor's opinions to the empire at large and could be exploited by Christians prepared to go on the offensive on their own account.

Law and the citizen

In the first century CE, many people ruled by Rome were not subject to, or protected by, the safeguards of Roman law, and the empire's territories were a mosaic of diverse traditions, customs and practices. Roman citizenship was, for many but not all, a much-prized privilege, which could be allocated to communities through various block grants, as well as to individuals, as recognition of Roman-ness or an acknowledgement of service. The granting of citizenship was awarded as an exercise in imperial patronage. This focused gratitude on the emperor (often expressed through inscriptions) but was also a delicate reminder of the discretionary element in the whole procedure. Although there were tacit criteria, which should normally have been observed, some emperors, such as Claudius I, were notably more generous than others.

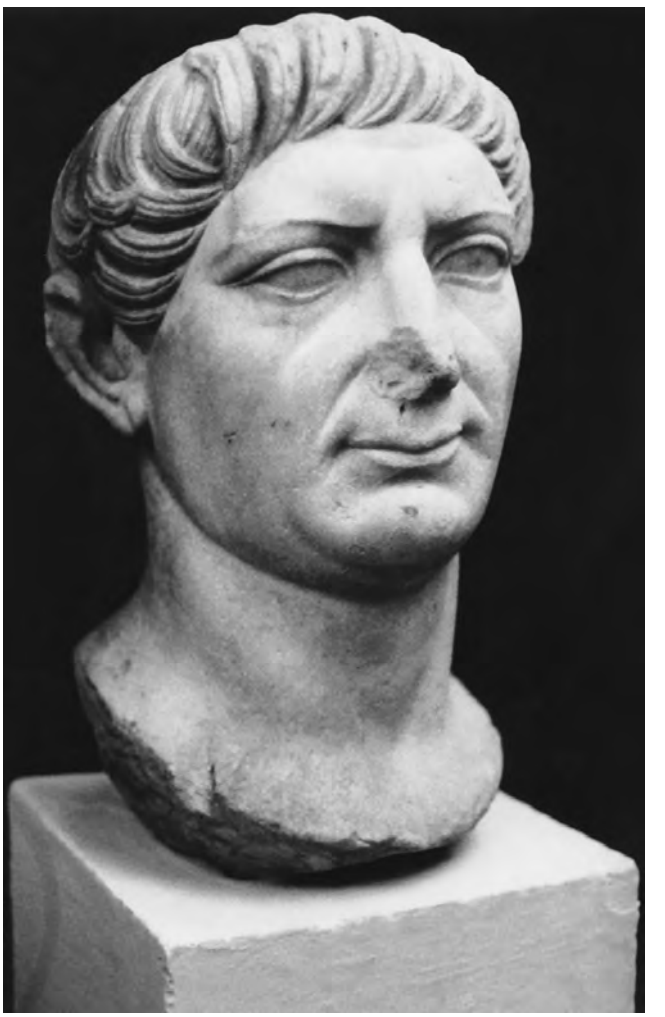

Figure 2.5 Bust of Trajan from Ephesus. Photo J. C. N. Coulston

Roman legal procedures in the resolution of disputes were also available to some non-citizens. The Spanish city constitutions generated by Vespasian's grant of Latin right stipulated that, when not otherwise provided for, the *municipes* 'are to deal with each other in all these matters under the civil law under which Roman citizens deal or will deal with each other', even though not all the inhabitants of the cities were Roman citizens (*Law of Irni*, ch. 93 in Gonzalez 1986: 198–9). However, in some cases, it was inconvenient for a new citizen to be exempted from local usages; thus, under Marcus Aurelius, one Julianus of the North African Zegrenses was granted citizenship along with his children, 'with the laws of their people remaining intact' (Sherwin-White 1973). At the same time, processes of Roman law, initially designed for use in Rome, were adapted for use in the provinces, and the interaction of Roman law (or local perceptions of Roman law) with local usages resulted in multiple courts and jurisdictions, often informal, which were open to exploitation by those best qualified to do so (Humfress 2013).

Law (and legal privilege) had complex ties to citizenship, status and identity. Most famous among Christian examples of this was Paul of Tarsus who, on his arrival at Jerusalem, found himself affirming his multi-cultural identity. Having been seized by a mob, he had to be rescued by the soldiers. The guard commander mistook him for an 'Egyptian' terrorist and asked him if he spoke Greek. Paul replied that he was a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen, he observed patriotically, of no mean city. He was then allowed to address the crowd and did so, affirming his Jewish identity, in Aramaic: 'I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel, I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers' (*Acts* 22.3). His speech failed to win over the mob and the soldiers prepared to flog Paul to find out more. At this point, Paul's identity as a Roman citizen, who was exempt from flogging without trial, quickly surfaced, much to the embarrassment of his captors (22.25–29) and he was removed to be tried before Felix, the governor (23.23–35). After a long delay in prison, Paul was brought before Felix' successor, Festus, from whose jurisdiction he appealed, as was his right as a Roman citizen, to the emperor.

Confining certain legal privileges to a small elite of citizens worked, while the elite remained small. However, as the Roman citizenship expanded it became less of a privilege. New procedures evolved to deal with the greater numbers of Roman citizens and, in the second century, two new legal categories of person evolved, the 'more honourable' *honestiores* and the 'more humble' *humiliores* (Garnsey 1970); the latter were subject to worse and more humiliating punishments than the former, the dignity of whose status was preserved even when convicted of crimes carrying the death penalty – they could simply be beheaded, while the lower classes were liable to crucifixion, burning alive and being publicly devoured by wild beasts (Digest 48.19; Harries 1999: 135–52; for philosophy of punishment, Hillner 2015). This two-tier system underlay the type of punishment that some Christian martyrs endured: Polycarp of Smyrna, for example, was burned alive in the arena in 155, while the martyrs of Lyon in 177 and of Carthage in 203 faced wild boars, bears and other animals in the arena.

In 212, the emperor Caracalla granted citizenship to all the free people of the empire, including Christians, many of whom would have been citizens already. This removed numerous anomalies at a stroke but left the imperial government with a new problem, the numbers of citizens with the right of appeal to the emperor. Over the next two centuries, a more complex and multi-tiered system of justice and appeals evolved (Theodosian Code 11.30). The courts of first resort were those of the provincial governors, now often described simply as *iudices* (judges), who, under the reforms of Diocletian, were given smaller areas to look after, while the emperor's role as the final judge was delegated, at least in part, to new super-provincial officials, the praetorian prefects, who evolved in the first part of the fourth century. But the emperors could never become entirely disengaged from the judicial process and remained the court of last resort, whenever unprecedented, intricate or politically sensitive matters were at stake.

In a separate development, episcopal jurisdiction (*episcopalis audientia*) achieved official recognition under Constantine and his successors (Harries 1999: 191–211). Within Christian communities, bishops had long been accepted as arbiters of disputes and held hearings to decide matters between members of

the faithful. In theory, the purpose was not to impose a solution but to act as a mediator and reconcile the disputants. When Constantine sought to extend the application of bishops' hearings to include non-Christians, he risked subverting the principle of consent on which much episcopal authority in the settling of disputes was based. For this reason, the evolution of episcopal justice in the fourth century was more hesitant than the laws imply, and by the early fifth century, the imperial lawyers had assimilated the jurisdiction both of bishops and of the judges in Jewish courts to the operation of arbitration, which depended on the consent of all parties involved and from which there could be no appeal. The two main benefits of imperial involvement for episcopal 'judges' were the moral backing provided by the emperors' authority and the right to appeal to the lay authorities for enforcement of their decisions, as or when required.

Bureaucrats

The Christian polemicist, Lactantius, writing in the early fourth century CE, complained of Diocletian that the creation of the Tetrarchy, rule by four emperors, which occurred in 293 CE (see Leadbetter in Chapter 10), gave rise to a military and administrative machine that ruined the state (*On the Deaths of the Persecutors* 7.3–4). Provinces established in the first century CE and adapted in minor ways since, were split into smaller administrative units, roughly doubling the number of governors and their staffs. These governors (*praesides*, *consulares*, *proconsuls*) were supervised by deputies (*vicarii*), who also had staffs and were themselves subject to super-governors, the praetorian prefects, whose number stabilised at four after Constantine. Co-existing with this system, which was largely designed for civil administration, was a military structure, designed to cope with defence and security requirements on a regional rather than a strictly provincial basis; thus, for example, the defence of the Channel coasts, in the provinces of Britain and Gaul, was in the hands of a single military official, the Count of the Saxon Shore.

Lactantius, who regarded Diocletian as 'an author of crimes and an inventor of evils' because he persecuted Christians, blamed on him the corrupt and complex system of bureaucratic government which characterised the later Roman empire from the early fourth century onwards. But his hero, Constantine, was no less responsible for increasing the number of those involved in government. Under him, a burgeoning palace administration, headed by the Master of the Offices, helped to centralise the main functions of government on an increasingly intricate court bureaucracy (see Kelly 2004). These included finance (i.e. taxation and the administration of the imperial estates), which was run by two officials, the so-called Count of the Sacred Largesses (*comes sacrarum largitionum*) and the Count of the Private Estates (*comes rerum privatarum*); justice, including both criminal justice and dispute settlement and communication with the empire at large, through formal dispatches, drafted by the secretariat; and imperial laws, decided by the fifth century by the emperor's council, the consistory, and drafted in appropriately eloquent language by the imperial quaestor (Harries 1988). The administrative picture was further complicated by the rise of the second imperial capital, Constantinople. Founded by Constantine in 330 as a lesser 'New Rome' (the senators were 'distinguished', *clari*, but not *very* distinguished, *clarissimi*, as they were at Rome), Constantinople evolved in the fourth century as a serious second capital, with its own self-confident bureaucracy composed of members of the eastern elite drawn from the cities of the east. By the early fifth century, this second administration could act independently of the west and was to carry forward the Roman heritage into the Byzantine empire.

However, *pace* Lactantius, the numbers involved in late Roman administration, although large by comparison with early centuries, were tiny compared with the bureaucracies of the late twentieth century. It has been calculated that there were some 3,000 'very good jobs' (Heather 1994; see also Jones 1964: 572–96) in each half of the empire, east and west, by *c.* 400 CE, of which *c.* 2,700 belonged to the central palatine *officia*. In addition, provincial administration created in the region of 10,000 jobs. All this took no account of unpaid supernumeraries on the waiting lists, or of the turnover.

Holders of high office might serve for little more than a year, while the middle-ranking bureaucrat might be signed up for a period of fifteen or twenty years. So the numbers involved in the administration per generation were considerably greater than the number of posts available. As significant was the evolution of a bureaucratic culture of government. Defined by rules rather than genuinely (or chaotically) creative, late Roman government was excessively concerned with hierarchies, departmental 'empires' and lines of demarcation between jobs and offices. Both within the palace and in society at large, the importance of correct record-keeping was enhanced: a new archive was perhaps created near the Hippodrome at Constantinople in the mid fourth century (Kelly 1994).

The Roman Senate and provincial administration

The Roman Senate, although packed with supporters and clients of emperors, retained a collective sense of its historical identity as the ruling council of the empire, and expected to share in the duties and rewards of its government. The Senate of the first and second centuries retained the core of its traditional career structure, a series of offices, beginning with the quaestorship (finance), proceeding to the praetorship (justice) and culminating with the consulship. Outside Rome, the Senate provided governors for the provinces and generals for the armies. Certain areas of the empire, notably Asia Minor, Africa and Italy (which was not treated as a province before the third century), became and remained senatorial preserves. But although governors were supreme in their spheres while they were in office, tenure of the post was not as easy as it appeared. The governor's duties were straightforward. He was the supreme judge within the province (although minor jurisdiction was delegated to the cities) and had 'the right of the sword' and a duty to ensure that justice was properly administered, the weak protected, and that the rich and powerful did not gain unfair advantages. He had financial responsibilities and might well have military duties, especially in difficult frontier areas, as Tacitus' father-in-law Agricola had in Britain. Powerful vested interests in a province might launch a prosecution after a governor's departure from office. Sometimes such prosecutions, such as that of Marius Priscus, governor of Africa in 100 CE (Pliny, *Letters* 2.11) were justified. On other occasions, however, private grudges may be suspected. Pliny acted for a governor of Bithynia, who was initially charged by 'the province', but a second delegation arrived, insisting that they truly represented 'the province' and that the charges should be withdrawn (Pliny, *Letters* 7.6 and 7.10).

The threat of prosecution encouraged governors to take precautions. They were advised to be tactful, but to avoid becoming too close to any of the locals; this should be contrasted with the provincials' propensity to claim close friendship with governors and even emperors. They were forbidden by the statute known as the *Lex Julia* on extortion (*Lex Julia repetundarum*) from taking 'gifts', because they could be construed as bribes. Prudent governors like Pliny kept a strict record of their decisions. Pliny also referred anything possibly outside his sphere or potentially controversial to the emperor, in part to ensure that he could not be appealed against later. In the rhetoric of late Roman legislation, which made much of its concern for the accountability of officials, the corruption of governors was taken as almost axiomatic. Yet, despite the fuss made, convictions for corruption were relatively rare. This may have been due to the efficiency of the Roman establishment in protecting its own, but there may also have been a problem in establishing the truth of allegations coming from doubtful or prejudiced sources.

Court records contained summaries of the proceedings in every trial, thus allowing a governor or other judge to be detected in abuses of procedure. Such records underlie the accounts of some Christian martyrdoms, for example those of Scillium in North Africa in 180 CE, which record the interrogation of a group of Christians by a bewildered but nonetheless scrupulous governor. The format was ideal for the 'bearing of witness' before the governor and the official status of the court record lent further veracity and thus authority to the 'witness' of Christians who declared '*Christianus sum*' in open court and suffered for their faith. But many later accounts of the interrogation of martyrs, perhaps inspired by Eusebius' lurid accounts of the *Martyrs of Palestine* under Diocletian, chose

instead to focus on the 'madness' and unbridled rage (*furor*) of the judge, emphasising thereby what they saw as the fundamental illegality of the entire process.

In the course of the second and third centuries, senatorial control of most provinces was replaced by the appointment of *equites*. The military instability of the third century and the requirement that emperors attend to the needs of the frontiers removed the centre of power finally from the city of Rome and thus effectively sidelined the Senate. New imperial capitals grew up in favoured cities such as Sirmium on the Save, a tributary of the Danube, Trier, on the Moselle, Nicomedia in Bithynia, favoured by Diocletian, and the ultimate new imperial creation, Constantinople, dedicated by Constantine in 330. The Senate at Rome, however, remained a formidable assembly, which could not be ignored. As Roman citizenship spread, so the membership of the Senate expanded in the first and second centuries to take in provincials from much of the empire. Even when its activities seemed largely peripheral to the real needs of the empire in the third century, the Senate was saved from obscurity by the accumulated landed wealth and patronage of its membership and the prestige of its antiquity. In the early fourth century, Constantine revolutionised the senatorial order by granting senatorial rank to holders of office in the imperial administration. At the same time, he may also have removed the requirement that senators be resident at or near Rome. The long-term effect of this was to give provincial office-holders a 'senatorial' identity and status, while creating also a distinction in practice between holders of senatorial rank in the provinces or at court and the 'Romans of Rome' (although the two could and did overlap). In the late fourth century, the Roman Senate became more politically self-assertive. Senators of Rome occupied the Prefecture of the City and key governorships in Italy and Africa, while ties with the imperial court also improved (Matthews 1975). Despite the adherence of most emperors to Christianity, a powerful group of pagan senators persisted in the active promotion of pagan rites and values; the state paper of Symmachus requesting the restoration to the Senate of the Altar of Victory in 384 was taken as a definitive manifesto of the pagan cause and 'refuted' at the time by Ambrose of Milan (Liebeschuetz 2005/2010: 61–94) and in 402 by the Spanish Christian poet Prudentius (*Against Symmachus* 2). In the fifth century, as the power of the western emperor waned and the Germanic kingdoms of Gaul, Spain and Africa expanded, the Senate at Rome retained a confident separate identity, even creating an emperor again from its number, briefly, in 455.

The scope of government

As the Roman empire evolved through conquest and diplomacy, diversity was accommodated and encouraged. Provided the administration's limited objectives of maintaining military security, supported by the collection of taxes, and of maintaining order and administering justice where appropriate were met, local systems were left largely intact. Cities, especially in the Greek east, accustomed to centuries of autonomy, still ran their internal affairs and jealously guarded their traditional privileges; on the Inscriptions Wall at Aphrodisias in Caria, for example, documents were preserved asserting the city's free status and immunity from, inter alia, the tax on nails (Reynolds 1982, document 15). When times were good, members of local elites competed to hold magistracies and to fund and administer public services, such as the water supply, the markets or the repair of roads. Despite the wide remit of the city councils, much was left to private initiative. Leading citizens vied with their rivals in and beyond their own city to construct beautiful buildings, harbours, colonnades and other public spaces, and to provide fresh amenities. These monumental undertakings entailed often huge expense, but it was more than compensated for, in the eyes of the benefactor, by the status that accrued to the successful patron and the honours that would be offered to him (or her) by his (or her) grateful fellow-citizens.

In private dealings, the role of government was similarly restricted. Apart from limited *alimenta* schemes, established by both emperors and private patrons for the rearing of some children at public expense, and concern on the part of some city councils for their corn supply, the state took

no responsibility for the economic welfare of families, the orphaned, the widowed or the old; there were no pensions or social security. Education and healthcare were not publicly funded, although there were rules about how many teachers of rhetoric (at secondary level), doctors or philosophers could be granted privileges because of the importance of the work they did. Prior to Augustus, public authorities took little interest in private morality; punishment of adultery, for example, was the responsibility of the family, whose 'honour' was damaged, not of the community as a whole.

Under the empire, more powers were drawn to the centre and the private space available to the citizen contracted. This was in part due to the ambition of emperors and administrators to expand their respective remits, but it was also the inevitable consequence of the expansion of the Roman citizen body; as other jurisdictions faded into obsolescence, a correspondingly greater burden fell on the Roman courts and thus also on the emperor, as the supreme judge, and his staff.

By the second century CE, difficulties began to arise in the relationship of centre to periphery due to wider social and economic changes which affected the city councils, the backbone of the imperial system. New social strata evolved above the heads of the decurion or local councillor. Ambitious men with money or connections moved upwards into those strata, leaving their less wealthy colleagues to foot the bill for local services. Local council duties became more onerous and less prestigious, and more people left. Economic changes for the worse in some areas also exacerbated the hardships of decurions who remained at their posts. Concerned for its revenues, the central government increasingly intervened to prevent the flight from the councils and, by the mid fourth century, to assert control over an increasing amount of the council's revenues and responsibilities (on Antioch in Syria, Liebeschuetz 1972). Such interventions were, however, of limited use. Successful migrants from the councils used patrons to escape detection and emperors themselves would have known that their expanding administrations profited from the fugitive decurions' talents. Part of the running of cities, however, was taken over by local bishops, whose coffers, filled as they were with the charity of the pious and wealthy, financed not only churches but also some of the public services, hitherto the responsibility of the councils.

Some responsibility for the increased centralisation of the Roman system rested with the subjects themselves. Pliny's letters from the wealthy and normally peaceful province of Bithynia from 110 to 113 show an intensely competitive assemblage of cities, where expenditure was out of control (Pliny, *Letters* 10, 17a, 18, 32), corruption was suspected (ibid. 37–8, 81–2) and records of important transactions had conveniently gone missing (ibid. 31, 56, 58). His own special status was significant for the future; he had been sent in as an imperial troubleshooter with special powers to intervene in the cities' financial affairs. Where problems were confined to a smaller area, another solution was to appoint a *curator*, who was to deal with the locals but be accountable to the centre. Sometimes even a *curator* was unable to sort things out; Aphrodisias, in the late second century, is found appealing to the provincial governor of Asia to intervene to ensure that the *curator*'s arrangements, which had failed so far, were adhered to (Reynolds 1982: document 16). Such appeals, from subjects in distress, cannot have been unusual and could be advantageous in the short term as the emperor was expected to use his powers of patronage to help out. But the inevitable, if not always obvious, consequence of inviting central intervention was to expand the power of the centre at the expense of local self-determination.

In parallel with this, criminal law became more intrusive, and penalties, partly driven by popular opinion rather than central diktat, more severe. More offences were created in law. More crimes became assimilated to that of treason, a development which restricted the civil liberties and particularly freedom from torture of those accused. Public punishment and torture asserted the state's control over the body of the criminal. But, as Foucault argued (1975), an ideology of control provokes its opposite in a counter-culture of rebellion or subversive discourse. Jewish writers such as the author of 2 *Baruch* (*c.* 100 CE) developed a counter-discourse to the sack of Jerusalem in 70 CE and the *Judaea Capta* coins which celebrated it (Esler 1995). Later, we see this literature of protest take shape in the martyr acts in which Christians are shown defying the efforts of the state to control their bodies through harsh imprisonment, chains, interrogation under extreme torture and, ultimately, through death.

The precedent of Augustus' adultery law encouraged emperors further to interfere in the private lives and beliefs of the citizen. The stridently moralistic tone of late Roman legislation, pagan and Christian, reflects the emperor's perceived right to impose his morality on the empire as a whole, through the force of law if necessary. Diocletian's denunciation of incest in 295 (children of such couples were illegitimate) and Constantine's extensive legislation on celibates (whose testamentary restrictions, imposed by Augustus, were removed), adultery and divorce added up to a formidable programme of interference in marriage and the family (Evans Grubbs 1995). Because of their moral mission, the emperor's right to legislate extended from action to belief. Emperors who persecuted Christians justified their actions on grounds of the public good; the *pax deorum* was threatened by 'atheists', who refused sacrifice to the gods. In the fourth century, roles were reversed, and the requirements of Christian religious concord were invoked against heretics, pagans and others, who became liable to legal disabilities (or worse) if they persisted. It was not enough for the state to control the body; it also sought to direct the soul.

Conclusion

The new Jerusalem

In the first century CE, Jerusalem was an unknown city on the edge of the empire, emerging briefly and tragically into the limelight when the temple was destroyed and the population of Jerusalem expelled in 70 CE. Hadrian had proceeded to refound the city as the Roman colony of Aelia Capitolina, presided over by the twin deities, Jupiter Capitolinus and the emperor himself, Aelius Hadrianus.

But memories based on identity, religion and history could not be so easily destroyed. Constantine's victory over his rival Licinius in 325 at last gave the first Christian emperor control of the holy places. As Eusebius' *List of Place Names* (*Onomasticon*) demonstrated, with vignettes of locals eager to direct visitors to Noah's Ark and other historical or sacred sites, there already existed a thriving tourist industry in the Bible lands. However, the bishop of Jerusalem, Macarius, was quick to exploit the new opportunities offered by imperial patronage. Beneath Hadrian's Temple to Venus was unearthed the Holy Sepulchre itself; under Constantine's active guidance, the site was renovated and a new Golgotha basilica constructed (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 3.25–40; Cameron and Hall 1999: 137–9). Two other sites, the caves of the Nativity at Bethlehem and the site of the Ascension, also received churches, financed by Constantine, in association with his mother, Helena (ibid. 3.41–43.3). Immediately, all became foci for pilgrimage – and a doubtless lucrative tourist industry. Soon after Helena's journeys in the Holy Land in the late 320s, alleged relics of the True Cross were unearthed in Jerusalem and their discovery became linked to Helena's presence in the Holy City (Hunt 1982: 38–48; Drijvers 1992).

In the footsteps of this legend, another empress, Eudocia, also journeyed to the Holy Land in 438, extending pre-existing court patronage by further activity generated by her personal presence (see Chapter 18 in this volume). In the early 440s, she retired to reside in Jerusalem where she was to remain for some twenty years. Like Helena, Eudocia turned to the Holy Land following a dynastic upheaval (although Eudocia, unlike Helena, was also a casualty) and like her model she built churches, adding to them monasteries and hostels; she is also credited with the enlargement of the city to the south to take in Mount Sion (Hunt 1982: 238).

This transformation is one of the most dramatic instances of how the Roman world changed with the coming of Christianity. Orosius ascribed Christianity's success in part to the stability and unity created by Rome's empire; he did not add that this was also enabled by one of the world's longest-lived and most successful autocracies. Imperial unity was maintained, at some cost, by emperors and armies for over 400 years; even as late as 417, Orosius hoped that the prosperity enjoyed by the Christian empire (by contrast with the disasters experienced under pagan rule) might still endure. What neither he nor any Christian writer could admit was that all emperors, including Christian

emperors, were autocrats first and Christians second – despite the efforts of their propagandists, such as Eusebius of Caesarea, to pretend otherwise.

Piety, as Constantine (and others) proclaimed, brought victory – but having good soldiers helped as well. For emperors, Christian and pagan alike, had as their chief duty the defence of the empire. Although it had been possible in the peaceful times of the second century for emperors such as Hadrian to substitute other priorities in the search for military glory, the military character of the emperor was central to his function and the needs of the army could never be ignored. Strategic changes, such as the evolution of designated frontier forces and a central striking force based round the emperor or his deputies, did not affect the basic goals of imperial policy, victory and security. When the frontiers of western Europe collapsed in the face of mass migration early in the fifth century, the failure of imperial security policy was plain for all to see. Local elites in Britain, Gaul, Spain and central Europe reached new accommodations with their new overlords, regional identities reasserted themselves and loyalty to the 'centre' in Italy waned, as many western aristocrats asked themselves 'what have the Romans done for us?' and found no answer. But just as 'Jerusalem' was both a symbol and a city, so Rome in the post-Roman world would also find a new identity; to 'be Roman' in the sixth century was to 'be Christian'.

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3

GRAECO-ROMAN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

Luther H. Martin

Doctrines must take their beginnings from that of the matters of which they treat.
(Giambattista Vico)

'Beginnings,' it has been suggested, is a more useful category for the investigation of early Christianity than the more common notion of 'origins,' an idea that implies an ahistorical view of religion as somehow *sui generis*. Commenting on the passage from Vico cited above (Vico 1970: par. 314), Edward Said has argued that 'beginnings' acknowledges historical relationships of 'continuity or antagonism or some mixture of both' between doctrines and institutions studied and their context (Said 1975: 3, 347–381). In this sense, any historical investigation of early Christian beginnings must include their intellectual and religious alternatives in the Graeco-Roman world and the relationship of the various early Christianities to these alternatives.

The Graeco-Roman world

A change in the course of Western history was initiated by the conquests of Alexander the Great of Macedon (356–323 BCE) who successfully united the Greek peoples in opposition to Persian hegemony and, in the process, established a Graeco-Macedonian empire that extended from the Aegean in the west to the Indus River in India and from the Black Sea in the North to Nubia and the Sahara in Africa.

Already the second-century CE Bithynian historian, Arrian, had written a seven-book history of Alexander, the *Anabasis of Alexander*, and a ten-book history of *Affairs after Alexander* (of which only fragments survive). It was not until the eighteenth century, however, that Alexander's imperial conquests became defined as initiating a discrete period of history with a conclusion in 30 BCE, the year Augustus annexed Egypt, the final autonomous kingdom of Alexander's former empire, into that of Rome (Gast 1782; similarly, Gillies 1807). The significance of this period of history, defined in political terms as extending from Alexander to Augustus, was initially dismissed by scholars as 'of no interest in itself, and is only so far of value as it helps us to understand the preceding centuries,' at least until 'the absorption of Greece by the Romans.' It was certainly considered to have no influence 'on the destinies of the future world' (Grote 1854: x). Only in the final quarter of the nineteenth century did this important and transformational period of history begin to attract scholarly attention (with the second edition of Droysen's *Geschichte des Hellenismus* (1877)).

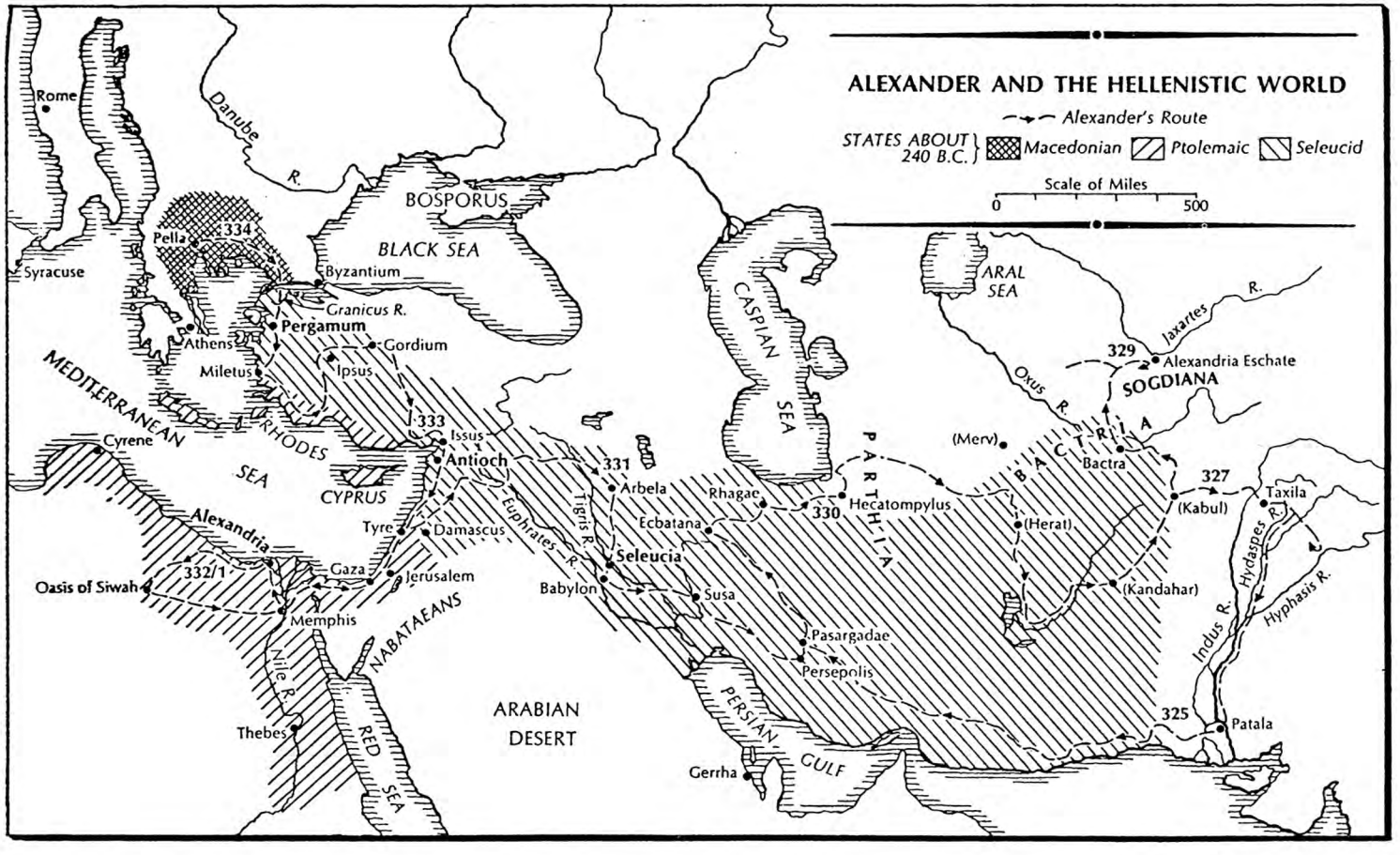

Figure 3.1 Map of Alexander's empire (from Martin 1987: 5), with the permission of Oxford University Press

Scholarly neglect of the historical period after Alexander until late in the nineteenth century had much to do with the prevailing assumption among scholars in Christian Europe that a new historical era had been inaugurated during the reign of Augustus with the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1–7). The 'pagan' world of the period immediately preceding this Christian 'charter event' became relegated, thereby, to a theologically and thus historically diminished background against which the emergence of a new Christian period of Western history might be writ. A predominantly Christian culture was only realized historically and politically, however, in the final decades of the fourth century CE with the imperial decrees of the Christian emperor, Theodosius, that prohibited all non-Christian religious practices and established Christianity as the sole legitimate religion of the Roman empire. From this perspective, a Graeco-Roman period of cultural—in contrast to political—history may be defined as extending from the encounter of ideas and religious practices occasioned by the internationalism of the first 'Western' empire in the late fourth century BCE to the establishment of the West as a 'Christian culture' in the late fourth century CE; it includes the intellectual and religious histories not only of the Greek empire established by Alexander and those of his successors but that of the Roman imperium as well. It is out of the world of this Graeco-Roman period with its largely 'Hellenistic' culture (Droysen 1836–1843) that the early Christianities emerged and were given their shape.

Broadly understood, the predicate 'Hellenistic' refers to the general diffusion of Greek culture among those peoples conquered by Alexander as a consequence of his Hellenizing policies, a cultural program actively pursued by his successors. It included the establishment of Greek as the international language of politics and commerce, the introduction of Greek cultural and civic institutions into those cities among the peoples Alexander had incorporated into his empire and even the founding of new Greek cities, such as Alexandria in Egypt, and subsequent Greek emigration as well as non-Greek immigration with a consequent dissemination of Greek values and ideas. Despite interactions which occurred as a consequence of cultural contact among the diverse cultures included in Alexander's empire, especially in the area of religion, it was Greek values and ideas which dominated into late antiquity, even throughout the reign of Rome, and which defined a Hellenistic cultural world.

The category of 'world' has re-emerged in cultural studies to describe a boundaried set of social relationships together with its system of acquired knowledge. It differs from the earlier idea of *Weltanschauung* or 'world view' first used by Kant to describe the holistic comprehension of the phenomenal world (Kant 1951: 93). In the nineteenth century, the notion was internalized to designate the subjective 'meaning' of the world in terms of an individual's total experience of reality; its formulation was considered the proper function of culture, pre-eminently, of religion. In contrast to its Enlightenment and Romantic predecessors, the current usage of 'world' is as an analytic category employed to describe a particular religious system in terms of '*cosmos*' and '*nomos*,' coextensive scientific and socio-political categories of world formation and maintenance (Berger 1967: 24; see Paden 1994). Although the scientific framework of Hellenistic culture has received some attention in connection with the relationship of cosmology and religion (Martin 1987), the nomic, or social-political, aspects of Hellenistic philosophy and religion have received less. And questions concerning the relationship between these 'vertical' (cosmic) and 'horizontal' (socio-political) grids of world structure remain largely unaddressed.

Hellenistic cosmology

The scientific framework of the Hellenistic world is well exemplified by the Ptolemaic cosmology, the first comprehensively scientific view of the cosmos. Named for the second-century CE Alexandrian astronomer and mathematician, Claudius Ptolemy, who compiled and systematized contemporaneous astronomical knowledge in his thirteen-book *Almagest*, this cosmological model developed earlier Babylonian, Persian, Egyptian and Greek astronomical and astrological observations into a mathematically precise system (Adamson 2015: 195–201). Its descriptive and predictive efficacy endured

until the sixteenth century when the Copernican cosmological revolution established for modernity the heliocentric model of the 'solar system,' a view first proposed in the third century BCE by Aristarchus of Samos.

Most simply, the Ptolemaic cosmology described a geocentric system in which the earth, fixed in its position, was encompassed by seven successive spheres identified with the planets visible to the naked eye. Although alternative planetary orders were proposed, the most common was: the moon (considered, from a geocentric perspective, a planet), Mercury, Venus, the sun (like the moon, considered a planet), Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. The scientific basis for this system may be traced from the fourth-century BCE astronomer, Eudoxus of Cnidus, who described the motion of these heavenly bodies as concentric spheres moving around different axes and devised a mathematical explanation for these motions. This entire planetary system was understood to be encompassed within a stationary 'realm of the fixed stars.' This image of the cosmos—though not all of its mathematical evidence—dominated Hellenistic culture from its beginnings.

In the second century BCE, the Bithynian astronomer Hipparchus discovered the precession of the equinoxes, the gradual movement of the plane of the earth's equator relative to the stars. This observation, explained in modern astronomy as a wobble in the earth's axis, could only be understood in terms of the static geocentricity of Hellenistic science as movement in the entire celestial structure, including the realm of the stars. Since the fixed and motionless character of the stars was seen as the most important indication for regularity and stability in the universe and provided an empirical reference for philosophical speculations concerning absolutes, Hipparchus' discovery challenged any view of existence modelled upon cosmic immutability (Ulansey 1989: 76–82).

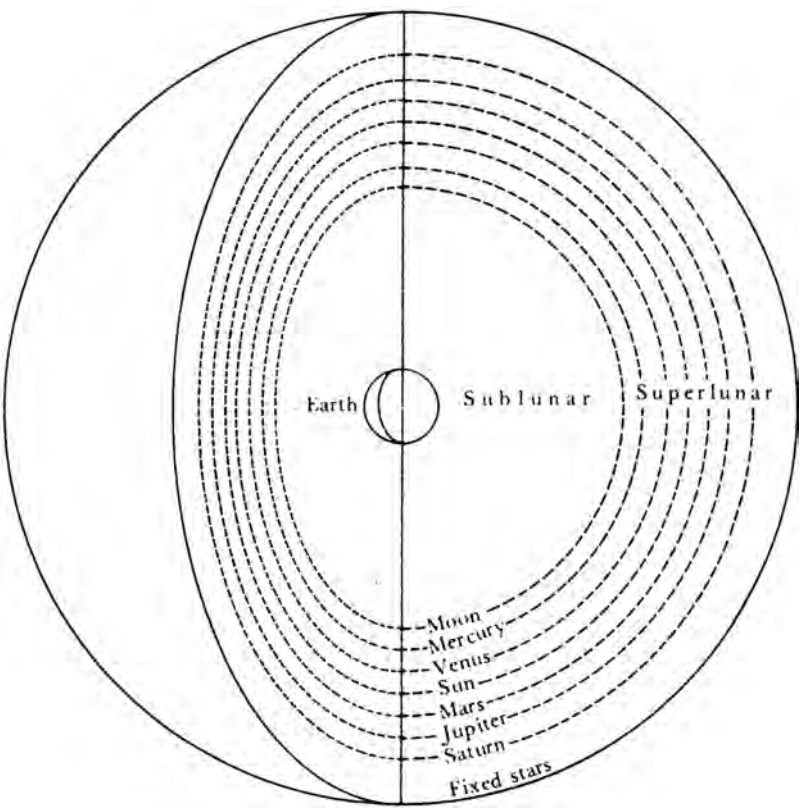

Figure 3.2 Diagram of the Ptolemaic cosmos. From Martin (1987: 9), with the permission of Oxford University Press

Following Hipparchus' discovery, philosophical and religious questions and reflections were increasingly modified or reformulated in consonance with this revisionist scientific discovery. The natural order of things, for example, once acknowledged as the inviolate rule of 'fate,' became relativized as the problematic of cosmic transitoriness, now designated by the play of 'chance' (personified as *Tychē* or *Fortuna*). And the gods, once imagined as superhuman beings inhabiting high places and the celestial regions, had to be relocated from their now transitory terrestrial, and increasingly even from their celestial, loci to an atemporal, transcendental locus and re-imagined as supernatural and 'otherworldly.' As this Hellenistic problematic was expressed by Pliny the Elder in the first century BCE:

> Everywhere in the whole world at every hour by all men's voices Fortune alone is invoked and named . . . and we are so much at the mercy of chance that Chance herself, by whom God is proved uncertain, takes the place of God.
>
> (Natural History *2.5.22)*

A few examples will suffice to illustrate that early Christians, too, were concerned with these cosmological transformations and referenced their problematic. The astrological character of the story in the Gospel of Matthew about 'Magi from the East' who followed a star to Bethlehem in order to pay homage to the 'newborn King of the Jews' (Matt. 2:1–12) has been well considered (e.g., Brown 1977: 166–177). Less noticed are the astrological implications of the discrepancy between the Gospel according to Matthew and that according to Luke as to whether conception or birth was the most propitious moment from which to calculate the 'beginning point' of Jesus' life. The author of Matthew seems to attribute significance to the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:16, 18–24) while the author of Luke emphasizes his conception (Luke 1:30, 35). These different views concerning the beginning of life reflect a technical debate in astrological practice, as Ptolemy documented (*Tetrabiblos* 3. 1).

Second, we might note that the Gospel according to Mark, which recounts stories neither of conception nor of birth, begins its account of Jesus' life with his baptism by John. On this occasion, the Gospel reports, 'the heavens opened . . . and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son"' (Mark 1:10–11). The Greek verb for the 'opening' of the heavens is *schizō*, 'to tear' or 'to rend asunder.' The only other occurrence of this word in this Gospel is at the conclusion of the life of Jesus when he 'uttered a loud cry, and breathed his last.' At that moment, the Gospel notes that 'the curtain of the [Jerusalem] temple *was torn* in two (*schizō*), from top to bottom' (Mark 15:37–38). This temple veil was described by Josephus as depicting a comprehensive representation of the heavens (Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.214). Thus, the author of this Gospel marks the end of Jesus' life as he marks the beginning—with reference to a 'rending of the cosmos' (Ulansey 1991).

Even as the Gospel of Mark seems to equate the life and death of Jesus with an alteration in the existing cosmic order, so Paul proclaims that Christians are liberated from an earlier view of the cosmos (Gal. 4:3). Paul described the dominance of this earlier view in terms of an observance of 'days, and months, and seasons, and years' (Gal. 4:10), seemingly a reference to the biblical creation story in which God creates the 'lights [the sun, the moon and the stars] in the firmament of the heavens . . . for signs and for seasons and for days and for years' (Gen. 1:14–15). However, this passage references also Hellenistic astrological concerns generally. The various early Christian groups, in other words, had regularly to relate to their scientific/cosmological context in their theological formulations.

Socio-political context of the Hellenistic world

More complex than the more or less commonly assumed cosmological framework of the Hellenistic world was its diverse socio-political structure. This complex structure can be typologized, however, in terms of two alternative kinds of social organization: kingship, on the one hand, a consolidation of power such as was claimed by the Hellenistic rulers, and kinship, on the other, a dispersion of power

consequent upon the spread of numerous alternative social groupings traditionally organized on the basis of kin-claims, which was replaced by imperial imposition.

Power in the Graeco-Roman world was officially claimed, and often imposed, by the structures and functionaries of the imperium, whether that of Alexander, those of his diverse successors or that reinstated by Rome. These imperial or kingship claims were reinforced by state cults, including, finally, the deification of the emperor. Already Alexander had encountered Persian cult practices that attributed divine qualities to their king. In Egypt he found a formal cult of the king as god (Taylor 1931: 6) and, in both places, the young king himself was so received. In 324 BCE, in response to Alexander's demand, Athens, followed by other Greek cities, voted Alexander to be Dionysus (Taylor 1931: 21–23). According to later accounts, Alexander's virgin mother was impregnated by a lightning bolt; her son nevertheless claimed to be descended on his father's side from Heracles, the greatest of the Greek heroes, and on his mother's side from Achilles, the bravest of Homeric heroes (Plutarch, *Alexander* 2; Nilsson 1951: 108). Both heroes, according to Greek mythology, had ascended to divine status. By claiming 'succession' from Alexander, the Hellenistic kings also made claim to heroic and divine descent (Taylor 1931: 25). Julius and Augustus were the real successors of Alexander, both in political terms as well as in their claim to rule by divine right—a right subsequently claimed by monarchs in the West until the rise of the modern democratic state.

Alternative to the consolidation and centralization of political power exemplified by Alexander's empire and by the subsequent Hellenistic and Roman kingdoms, a legion of counter-cultural groups—clubs or *collegia*—proliferated during the Hellenistic period claiming, by default, social power for themselves, whether that expression of power was expressed in political, religious, esoteric or transcendental terms. Documented from the political context of classical Greece (Thucydides 3.82; 8.54, 65), the founding and spread of such associations was provoked by the new possibilities of commercial and mercenary activity occasioned by the international successes of empire itself. As inhabitants of once locally defined cultures ventured forth into the cosmopolitan context of the Hellenistic world, they understandably sought to retain something of their traditional ancestry and identity: their language, their dress, their cuisine, their religion. Consequently, these new immigrants often formed 'social clubs' with their compatriots. They met together and drew up rules of association, they paid dues, they ate and drank together, they typically venerated one of their native deities as their patron and they often assumed the traditional familial responsibility for the 'proper' burial of their brethren in the alien lands they now inhabited. The ubiquitous characteristic of these Hellenistic associations was their sense of being a household or extended family, perhaps the most fundamental mode of human social organization. As one scholar summarizes the evidence concerning some twenty-four voluntary associations on Delos, they 'reinforced a sense of kinship and national identity on an island where disparate nationalities and languages abounded' (Kloppenborg and Wilson 1996: 189; for texts see Kloppenborg and Ascough 2011, Harland 2014 and Kloppenborg and Ascough forthcoming 2017).

Greek society and state, like that of virtually all cultures, had been founded on the family—groups of men who claimed descent from a common ancestor. This ancestor gave his name to the family and the veneration of the ancestor gave religious sanction to these social entities (Nilsson 1951: 65). If, for some reason, a common ancestor was absent, one might be invented, especially if a heroic or divine progenitor was desired. Whether ethnic or fictive, the sense of kinship was the most common characteristic of the Hellenistic associations (Kloppenborg and Wilson 1996: 13, 18, 112, 132, 134–135, 180, 189). The establishment of fictive-kin ties by adoption was a common Graeco-Roman practice of recruitment that ensured legitimate descendants in the face of high mortality. And Hellenization, in the sense of assimilating non-Greeks to Greek culture, often involved inventing for colonized or conquered peoples eponyms that might be connected with figures from Greek myths who had similar names (Nilsson 1951: 97, 98, 105). 'Greekness' was a matter of kinship (Thucydides 1.95.1).

While the Hellenistic kinship groups or 'clubs' seem to have limited membership to a particular ethnic group and/or to class or gender, some at least experimented with values of inclusiveness and equality in the face of a largely segregated and hierarchical world—as did some early Christians.

The association of Zeus in Philadelphia, for example, admitted 'men and women, freeborn and slaves' (Kloppenborg and Wilson 1996: 25; see Paul in 1 Cor. 12:13). These alternative values may have derived from the private religious associations of classical Athens in which foreigners, women and slaves all enjoyed equal rights with Athenian citizens (Foucart 1873: 5–12). Or, these values may have been championed for the Hellenistic world by the notion of 'the brotherhood of mankind' attributed to the emperor Alexander (see the prayer for the 'unity of mankind' reported by Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexandria* 7.11). Whether or not such a program was ever advanced by Alexander himself, Hellenistic romances clearly propagated this value in his name. Thus, the first-century BCE historian Diodorus Siculus wrote that the bringing together of the largest continents through intermarriage and ties of kinship to a common harmony and family ties was among Alexander's 'last plans' (Diodorus Siculus 18.4.4). Similarly, Plutarch averred that Alexander 'instructed all men to consider the inhabited world to be their native land . . . being blended together by ties of blood and the bearing of children' (Plutarch, *The Fortune of Alexander* 1.329C–D).

The claims to universal brotherhood and, thus, to centralized power inevitably favored a centralized political state in opposition to the dispersion of alternative social organizations with their local and limited criteria of kinship, no matter how egalitarian they may otherwise have been. The oppositional character inherent in the two differing types of socio-political organization and their differing views of power thrust Hellenistic efforts at imperial rule into conflict with local kinship associations. The dispersion of any such organized subgroups is typically viewed as a threat to the centralized authority and stability of political power unless a mutually accommodating relationship can be assured.

Classical Greek philosophy had always attempted to legitimate the dominant, non-democratic forms of rule. 'Thales' [sixth-century BCE] *sophia* was an attempt to legitimate tyranny, whereas the *philosophia* of Pythagoras and of later thinkers was designed to provide a non-democratic alternative to post-tyrannical society (Frischer 1982: 16). And Greek religion was always supportive of the state. As the classical Greek view of a world ordered by laws of nature that man and polis sought to replicate and to which even the gods were subject became confounded by the socio-political conflict wrought by the warring successors to Alexander's empire, innovative and redefined philosophical schools and novel religious associations proliferated as alternatives to a political order imposed by the Hellenistic kings. Examples from some of the philosophical and religious traditions were accepted by political power as supportive or at least non-threatening, while others, including the early Christianities, were viewed as subversive, or at least suspicious.

The writing of a Christian 'universal history' by the author of Luke-Acts, was an early Christian referencing of Roman international hegemony; the author even has a Roman centurion support the innocence of Jesus (Luke 23:47). However, this Lucan history, established by the later Christian world as 'normative,' was at the time of its writing only one of a wide spectrum of views held by various 'Jesus people' and 'Christ cults' making differing claims upon the name of Jesus (Mack 1988, 1993, 1995; Smith 1990). Some of these groups—the group which produced 'Q,' the early Jesus 'sayings source,' for example, and those who compiled Mark and the other 'canonical' gospels, and, of course, the letters of Paul—would eventually be reconciled, harmonized or synthesized into the Lucan-Roman model of a universalized theological history. Those 'Christian' groups that would not or could not accept the Lucan standard were branded as heretical: the group which produced the 'Gospel of Thomas,' for example, or those which composed other non-canonical gospels or 'acts' of various apostles. When the Lucan view was accorded the authority of the 'Great Church' in the fourth century, these alternative Christian groups were themselves banished or burned.

The problematics, then, referenced by the early Christian movements mirrored those addressed by Greek and Roman philosophical and religious groups generally. They pursued similar cosmic and nomic questions with similar assumptions. They all offered explanations for their view of the world, required a disciplined style of life with a clearly articulated goal, produced a tradition of

exemplary predecessors—some of whom, like Socrates, were martyred—which culminated in a contemporaneous teacher, compiled an authoritative literature, and they all organized themselves in social groups defined by kinship terminology, membership in which required some type of formal recruitment or initiatory rites (Nock 1933: ch. 5). And claims to superhuman power as the legitimating basis for their authority, the most minimal definition of a religious system, were as likely to be made by 'philosophical' as by 'religious' groups.

Of course, there were differences between groups within both traditions, for example, between those whose views were influenced by the supernaturalism of Platonic tradition and those that adhered to the more naturalistic tradition of Aristotle. And a major difference between Greek philosophical and religious systems generally was a different 'division of labor' concerning ethics. Whereas Hellenistic religious groups had been concerned, for example, with venerating and propitiating the gods and with legitimating the social boundaries over which they presided, whether of kin or king, they were not, like those groups that identified with the biblical tradition, concerned with questions of ethics, relegating this issue to the philosophers.

To map the differing philosophico-religious groups that populated the Graeco-Roman period, their goals and aspirations, their differences and similarities, is to map a central feature of the cultural world of Christian beginnings.

Hellenistic philosophies

Although a classical period of Greek philosophy is generally concluded with the death of Aristotle in 322 BCE, the year following the death of his student, Alexander the Great, the naturalistic and empirical tradition of research exemplified by Aristotle's work continued throughout the Hellenistic period. This tradition was exemplified not only by the observations of such astronomers as Aristarchus (*fl.* mid third century BCE) and Hipparchus (*fl.* second half of second century BCE) but also by the advances of such mathematicians as Euclid (*c.* 325–*c.* 250 BCE), Archimedes (*c.* 287–212 or 211 BCE), Apollonius of Perga (*fl.* 200 BCE) and Erathosthenes (*c.* 285–194 BCE), and by the work of the naturalist Theophrastus (372/1 or 371/2–288/7 or 287/6 BCE). Despite continuing progress in scientific knowledge, however, Hellenistic philosophy was primarily characterized by 'a critical synthesis of earlier philosophies about the world' (Frischer 1982: 34). Life during this period was increasingly understood as subjected to irrational forces, to chance for example, or to powers beyond ordinary human control, which could only be dealt with by cult and magic (Samuel 1988: 169). This intellectual lapse, popularized in modern judgment as 'a failure of nerve' (Murray 1955), was as evident in the philosophical traditions as in the religious alternatives of the period. The popular successes of the Hellenistic philosophies were bought, in other words, at the price of their separation from scientific research (Long 1986: 12). By the time Rome eventually restored a generally ordered world through its efficient administration of the empire, the general investigation of nature and of the role of rational man in the ordered cosmos had become largely replaced by a practical concern with ethics, the rule and exercise of life that might offer a viable view of human identity in the face of both cosmological and socio-political transitoriness and transformation. Philosophical *theoria* was replaced, in other words, by *praxis*. All of the Hellenistic philosophical schools emphasized the question, first posed by Plato and Aristotle: 'What is happiness or well-being and how does a man achieve it?' (Long 1986: 6).

The increased focus upon practical ethics during the Hellenistic period established philosophers as exemplars and their philosophical 'schools' as, ideally, groups of exemplary followers. These schools not only endeavored faithfully to transmit the teachings of their founder, whose thought, however, was in fact often elaborated and modified, but also to emulate his life style. The first of the philosophical schools, established by Pythagoras in the sixth century BCE, were organized as quasi-religious associations that included rites of initiation, private teachings, the following of a dietary regime and provisions for burial (Burkert 1985: 302–303). In addition to the well-known contributions by the Pythagoreans to mathematics, music and astronomy, Pythagoreanism subsequently became a designation also for

recondite religious movements. The establishment of the Pythagorean societies was followed in the fourth century BCE by that of the Platonic 'Academy' and the Aristotelian 'Peripatetics,' both organized on the legal model of religious associations, and then in the early third century by the founding of the Epicurean 'Garden' and of Stoicism (Mason 1996).

In his historical overview of philosophers from Thales to Epicurus, the third-century CE writer Diogenes Laertius described these philosophical schools as 'successions.' He further organized these 'successions' into two major traditions (1.13): an Ionian lineage, from the pre-Socratics, through Plato and Aristotle, culminating with the Stoics (1.22–27) and an Italian lineage, from Pythagoras to Epicurus (8–10). Philosophy in the early Hellenistic period was dominated by the Epicurean and Stoic traditions along with a subsequent renaissance of Platonism from the late first century BCE.

The Epicureans

Epicurus (341–270 BCE), an Athenian citizen born on Samos, first met with some followers in the secluded garden of his home in Athens. His school, named after this original meeting place, soon spread throughout the Greek world and subsequently developed branches in Egypt, Asia, Mytilene and Lampsacus. By the first century BCE, Epicureanism had been introduced to the Roman world by Lucretius (*c.* 94–55 or 51?) through his magisterial poem *On the Nature of Things*. As such, the Epicurean schools—to which women were admitted as equals alongside men—epitomized the cosmopolitan and inclusory values of the larger Hellenistic world. Nevertheless, Epicurus and his followers rejected the allure of internationalization, opting instead for small alternative associations of philosophers bound

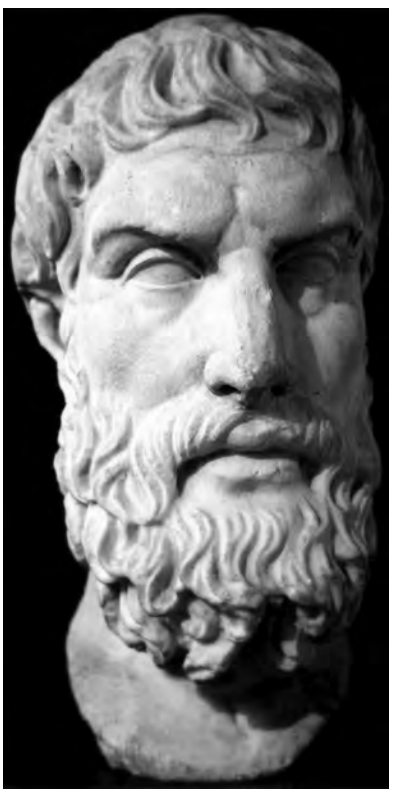

Figure 3.3 Epicurus, Roman copy of Greek original, third/second century BCE, in the British Museum. Wikimedia Creative Commons (photo Chris O—own work, all rights released)

by the ideal of friendship. The Epicureans recognized, however, the political reality of the civic world from which they sought to retire and they attempted, consequently, to establish good relations with those in power in order that they might be left alone (Frischer 1982: 40–41).

As with Hellenistic philosophy generally, the Epicureans were not so concerned with abstractions, such as Plato's 'Good' or Aristotle's superlunar and superhuman cosmos, as they were with the immediate human condition and the practical goal of a happy life. Although they did not deny the existence of the gods, the Epicureans—like the eighteenth-century deists—did reject any view of divine intervention in the affairs of this world. Rather, the deities, in their sublime and tranquil detachment, provided the model for human detachment from civic life. The Epicureans attributed value, consequently, only to this worldly reality as defined by sense perception.

Adopting and adapting the atomic theory of the fifth-century BCE philosopher, Democritus, they understood the world as the consequence of an infinite number of atoms that might collide and, from time to time, combine to form the phenomena of the sensible universe. Holding the cosmos to be a natural if accidental combination of atoms that would, at some point, decompose, they epitomized the Hellenistic attribution of existence to chance. Since, consequently, any phenomenon had value only in terms of its immediate practical advantage, pleasure was considered the highest good by Epicurus and his followers. By 'pleasure,' however, the Epicureans did not mean 'the pleasures of the prodigal or the pleasures of sensuality,' as many understood them in antiquity as today. Rather, as Epicurus wrote in a 'Letter to Menoeceus' preserved by Diogenes Laertius:

> By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul . . . It is sober reasoning, searching out the grounds of every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs through which the great tumults take possession of the soul.
>
> *(Diogenes Laertius 10.122–135: 131)*

For the Epicureans, in other words, pleasure referred to the ideal of a trouble-free existence in which the body was healthy and the mind undisturbed (Adamson 2015: 31–37).

Despite a veneration of Epicurus to the point of divinity by his followers (Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 5.1–54; Adamson 2015: 47), the Epicurean emphasis on withdrawal from the political world and its dismissal of any transcendent destiny had little appeal to Romans and their ideal of a just and good state guaranteed by the gods. Consequently, this thoroughly materialistic tradition was eclipsed by Stoicism in the philosophical imagination of the later Hellenistic period.

The Cynics and the Stoics

Stoicism was founded by Zeno of Citium (335–263 BCE), who began his career as a student of Crates (*c.* 368/365–288/285 BCE), a follower of the Cynic philosopher, Diogenes of Sinope (*c.* 412/403–*c.* 324/321 BCE). In some ways similar to the Epicureans, the Cynics had taught that the wise man will reject what is conventional in order to follow a 'natural' way of life based on action rather than thought. By 'natural,' however, Diogenes meant 'primitive' and the Cynics consequently withdrew not only from civic life as did the Epicureans but flaunted as well all social convention as constructs contrary to their ascetic style of life (Adamson 2015: 14–15). Although never institutionalized as a philosophical school, Cynicism continued to be influential throughout the Hellenistic period. Some have even noted a relationship between the simple life style advocated by the Cynics, the aphoristic form of their teachings and their social critiques, and those of the earliest Jesus traditions (Mack 1988: 67–69, 1993: 114–121).

When Zeno broke with Crates, he began to expound his own teachings in the marketplace of Athens among the colonnades (*stoa*), from which his school derived its name. He essentially developed the Cynic way of life into an ethical system that he integrated into a comprehensive philosophy (Adamson 2015: 78). Zeno and his followers prided themselves on 'the remarkable coherence of the[ir] system and the extraordinary orderliness of the subject-matter' (Cato, in Cicero, *On the Ends*

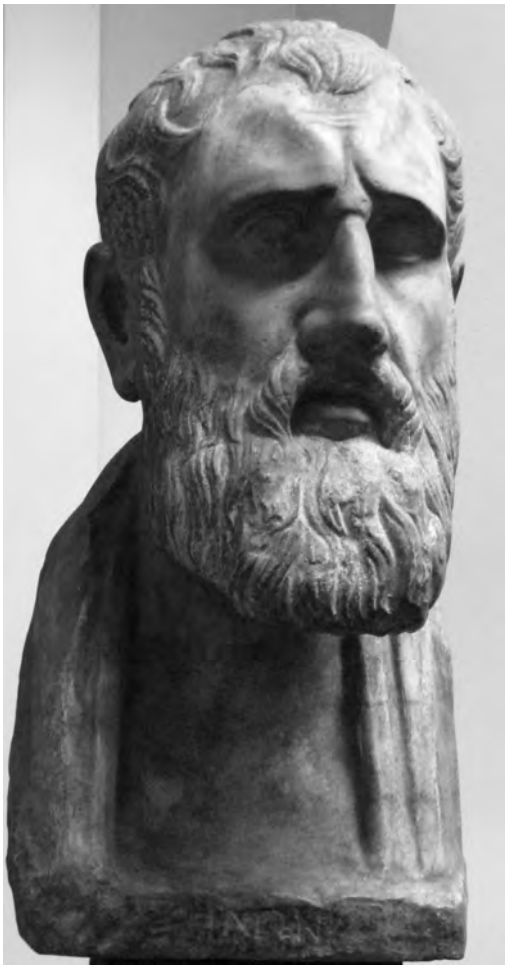

Figure 3.4 Herm of Zeno of Citium, cast in Pushkin Museum from an original in Naples. Wikimedia Creative Commons. Photo shako; own work https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AZeno_of_Citium_pushkin.jpg

of Good and Evil 3.74). Generally, the Stoics conceived of the cosmos as an organic whole, a pantheistic system of universal law. They owed much of their success to an ability to unify, by means of allegory, the various philosophical and popular expressions of cosmic law, whether this 'many-named' cosmic law was imagined as fire, as taught by the fifth-century BCE philosopher Heraclitus, or as fate or *heimarmenē*, the natural order of things or as the rational order of things (*logos*). This law received 'religious' expression by Zeno's successor, Cleanthes (331–232 BCE):

> Most glorious of immortals, Zeus
> The many-named, almighty evermore,
> Nature's great Sovereign, ruling all by law—
> . . .
> For thee this whole vast cosmos, wheeling round
> The earth, obeys, and where thou leadest
> It follows, ruled willingly by thee.
>
> (Hymn to Zeus, *trans. Grant 1953: 152)*

Stoicism provided, thereby, a philosophical rationale for the increasing universalism that came to characterize the Hellenistic philosophical and religious traditions.

Chrysippus (*c.* 280–207 BCE), the third head of the school after Cleanthes, refined the teachings of Zeno and consolidated them with various directions that were beginning to develop in Stoic teachings into what thereafter was considered throughout the Hellenistic period to be the orthodox or standard position. 'Had there been no Chrysippus,' the saying went, 'there would have been no Stoa' (Diogenes Laertius 7.183).

Despite the Stoics' comprehensive integration of logic, physics and ethics, Stoicism attracted less interest in late antiquity as a philosophical system than as a way of life, as the ethical writings of Seneca the younger (*c.* 4 BCE/1 CE–65 CE), Epictetus (mid first to mid second century CE) and Marcus Aurelius (121–180 CE) exemplify. Since cosmic law, in the Stoic view, governed moral order as well as the natural world, to live a life of virtue was to live a harmonious life in accord with nature. The primary characteristic of this natural law was rationality (*logos*), and reason, consequently, was the way to knowledge of its universal truth (Samuel 1988: 203). To cultivate this rationality, both a human endowment and the essence of divinity, and to live in harmony with it were to become 'offshoots' of god (Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.14.6) and thus 'kin' with him (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 10.6). The Stoics thus shared with Epicureans the goal of human perfectibility in this existence, but, in stark contrast to the Epicureans, the Stoic idea of a universal norm of virtue accorded more with Platonic (and later Christian) views concerning the transcendental nature of truth.

Hellenistic Platonism

A 'middle-Platonism' may be traced from the reaction of Antiochus of Ascolon (*c.* 130–69/68 BCE) against the first-century BCE emergence of philosophical scepticism, a position which, claiming the authority of Socrates, rejected all doctrine and questioned all positions on the grounds that things are finally unknowable (Diogenes Laertius 1.16). Influenced by Stoicism, however, Antiochus had understood that the goal of life was to live in accordance with nature. During this same century, Eudorus of Alexandria challenged this Stoic view of nature with the Platonic ideal of living in accordance with the 'likeness of god' (Plato, *Theatetus* 176B; Dillon 1977: 44). At about the same time, Nigidius Figulus, considered by Cicero to be the founder of neo-Platonism (Cicero, *Timaeus* 1), revised and revived Pythagoreanism in Rome. Pythagoras' teachings had been preserved by Plato and had influenced especially Plato's views of cosmology (Plato, *Timaeus*) and religion (Plato, *Phaedo*).

The transcendentalism of Hellenistic Platonism constituted a reaction against the scientific traditions of the Aristotelian tradition as well as against the materialistic and empirical philosophies of the Epicureans and, in part, the Stoics (Adamson 2015: 158). Platonists had always differentiated between the world of the senses and the world of ideas, insisting that sense perception is subject to deception. Consequently, early Hellenistic philosophical appeals to sensual reality became supplemented and, in late antiquity, even replaced by claims to a transcendental truth that blurred the distinction between philosophy and religion (Adamson 2015: 159). If Stoicism first provided a philosophical rationale for the universalism that came to characterize Hellenistic religions, middle-Platonism reinforced that rationale with a hypercosmic transcendentalism appropriate to the Ptolemaic cosmological map. This commitment of Hellenistic Platonism to 'a non-material, intelligible world beyond this one' together with 'a transcendent supreme principle' was central to all variations of Hellenistic Platonism; it culminated in the neo-Platonism of Plotinus (205–269/70 CE; Dillon 1977: 51).

Plotinus understood that the true self or soul is a child of 'God,' the 'Father' or the 'One' (*Enneads* 2.9.16), and that those who are with the One are, consequently, 'brothers' (*Enneads* 5.18.12; Adamson 2015: 209–215). The souls, in other words, are children of 'their father, God' which are 'brought up far away' not knowing 'who they themselves or their parents are' (*Enneads* 5.5.1). Those who know themselves—which is the command of God (*Enneads* 4.3.1)—will know their genealogy and, consequently, their divine origins (*Enneads* 6.9.7). For Plotinus, in other words, the human soul

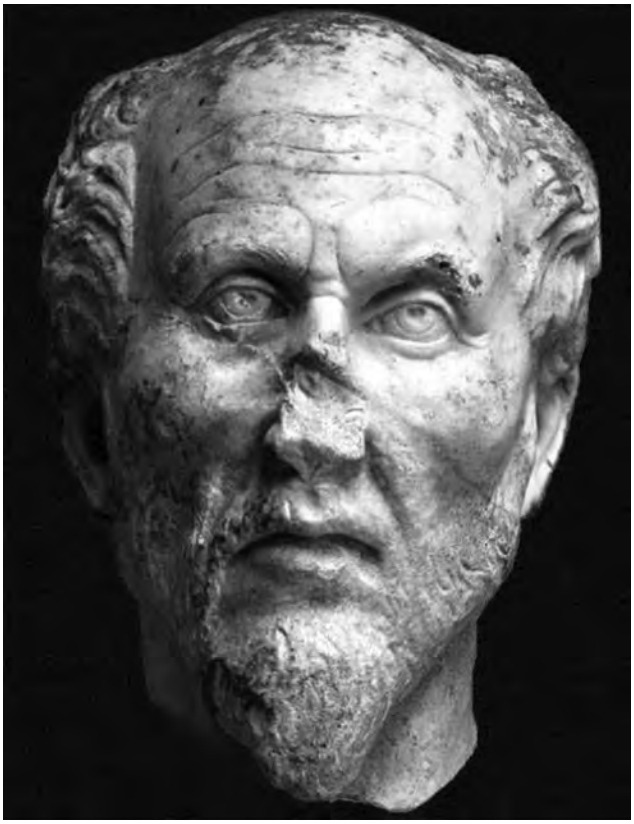

Figure 3.5 Plotinus, from the Museum in Ostia Antica. Wikimedia Creative Commons. Photo anonymous, but in the public domain https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3APlotinos.jpg

is kin by nature to the higher reality (*Enneads* 1.6.2, 2.3.9, 2.9.18, 3.3.1, 3.5.1, 4.4.45). Recognition of this kinship with God is the beginning of the soul's return.

Some of the early philosophers had claimed descent from the gods who gave sanction to the existing social and political order, or at least they claimed some analogy between themselves and divine characteristics (Frischer 1982: 18, 77–79). Pythagoras, for example, had not only claimed descent from Hermes (Diogenes Laertius 8.4) but asserted also that 'only god is wise' and that philosophy was 'the love of wisdom' (Diogenes Laertius 1.12; Frischer 1982: 20–21). Modern differences assumed between at least some of the philosophical schools and religious traditions, both social alternatives which sought legitimation by claims to superhuman power, were not so sharp in antiquity; their claim of kinship with the gods by descent later became transformed into philosophical and theological claims of epistemological privilege concerning truth.

Given Plotinus' emphasis on the kinship of realized souls, his vision of the ideal society would be constituted as a kinship group on the social model of the alternative communities that proliferated in the Hellenistic period generally. Plotinus actually petitioned the Emperor Gallienus to consign him a deserted city in Campania in which he and his aristocratic companions might resettle according to his utopian ideals under the name of Platonopolis (Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 12). Although Plotinus' request was rejected, his utopian vision was revived in Christian metaphor by Augustine's ideal of a transcendental 'City of God'—a legitimating model for political hierarchy (Williams 1955: 9–10) and the 'dream of many Christian centuries' (Hardy 1955: 257).

Hellenistic religions

Whereas philosophy retained an essentially Hellenic character during the Graeco-Roman period and was consequently one of the factors that shaped a Hellenistic culture, the history of religions was profoundly altered by the non-Hellenic cultural contacts and interactions initiated by the conquests of Alexander. Native cults with their base in local populations, including native Greek cults such as those of Dionysus, for example (Nilsson 1957), or of the Eleusinian Demeter, found themselves increasingly situated in an international and multicultural context. The Hellenization of these previously local deities, the Egyptian Isis, for example, and of their cults, involved their adaptation and transformation to the newly established and increasingly dominant Greek language, to conditions of scientific/cosmological universalism, political internationalism and to the consequences of military and commercial mobility and subsequent emigration.

Not all native religions wholeheartedly embraced Hellenization. Some, like the Hellenistic associations, resisted by attempting to preserve their traditional linguistic and cultural forms and, especially, the native character of their local deities; some even resisted Hellenization to the point of revolt against its political pressures and its military forces (Eddy 1961; Rudolph 1983: 286, 288). A series of Egyptian anti-Hellenistic revolts from 245 BCE provide one example, as do the Jewish revolts against Seleucid attempts to Hellenize Jerusalem in the second century BCE (1 and 2 Maccabees). Even Judaism, however, was strongly influenced by Hellenistic culture—especially in its diaspora—as the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek around the second century BCE indicates. Known as the *Septuagint* (*LXX*), after an alleged team of seventy-two translators, six from each of the twelve Jewish tribes, completed this translation in exactly seventy-two days. This translation was held to be as inspired and thus as authoritative for Greek-speaking Jews as was the Hebrew original (*Letter of Aristeas* 32, 307, 310–311). Native cults, which did not in some way adapt to the transformed conditions of the Hellenistic world, survived only in poetic reference or political rhetoric, if at all.

Hellenistic mysteries

The religious form generally considered most characteristic of the new Hellenistic religiosity is the 'mystery cult' (Bowden 2010). The characterization is, however, elusive since 'mystery' is both the self-designation of a wide range of Hellenistic social groups, from small collegial associations to some well-established Hellenistic religions, as well as a modern categorization for a number of Hellenistic cults for which a certain 'family resemblance' is proposed. As a self-designation, 'mystery' indicated minimally an association in which membership required some formalized procedure of initiation (Gk. *mysteria* = Lt. *initia*), usually under the patronage of a particular deity (Bremmer 2014). As a modern category, the Eleusinian Mysteries of Demeter—also a self-designation—is most often presented as paradigmatic.

The Mysteries of Demeter

The Mysteries of Demeter, celebrated in the town of Eleusis, fourteen miles west of Athens, seemingly developed from a family cult that initially admitted only citizens of Eleusis and perhaps only members of certain noble families of that town. At least the prerequisite for late priestly administrators of the cult was membership in one of two Eleusinian hereditary 'lineages' (*genea*).

According to a brief account of the origins of the Eleusinian mysteries by the Athenian orator Isocrates (436–338 BCE), Demeter founded her cult in Eleusis out of gratitude for certain unspecified 'services' extended her by the 'ancestors' of Eleusis and that initiation into the cult consisted, in part at least, of revealing to the initiates the nature of these 'services' (*Panegyricus* 28). According to the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, one of the ancestors of Eleusis, who had shown Demeter hospitality in her wanderings in search of her abducted daughter Persphone, was Eumolpus, a presumed son of

Poseidon and one of the mythical rulers of Eleusis. Consequently, Demeter 'showed [the Eleusinians] the conduct of her rites and taught . . . all mysteries' (*Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 184, 475). The 'Hierophant,' or chief priest of the Eleusinian cult, continued to be selected from the Eumolpidae, the family that claimed descent from this ancestor, as were the cult officials, known as the 'Exegetes of the Eumolpidae.' Similarly, the 'Daduch,' the second highest administrator of the cult, and the offices of 'Sacred Herald' and 'Altar-priest' were selected from the Kerykes. Although the genealogy of this family is less clear, they claimed descent from the lineage of Keryx, the 'herald,' who either was a son of Eumolpos (Pausanias 1.38.3) or of Hermes, the divine herald (Mylonas 1961: 234; Clinton 1974: 8). Figure 3.6 is a photo of Demeter in the form of a kistophorous Caryatid from her sanctuary in Eleusis. This object supported (with a matching sculpture) the roof of the sanctuary. Demeter carries on her head a *kiste* or sacred basket which probably contained the 'objects' of the mysteries and is decorated with symbols of the cult: ears of corn, poppies and roses.

Gennētai, members of a particular *genos*, were generally identified by their claims of descent from a common ancestor. Such *gennētai* were particularly concerned with the deity who was considered to be their ancestor or who had been the protector of the ancestors from whom they claimed descent and who, consequently, had some responsibility in the cult of that deity (Foucart 1914: 224–225). In addition to those claiming descent from a common ancestor, a (fifth-century?) law defined *gennētai*

Figure 3.6 Demeter as a kistophorous Caryatid, from the museum in Eleusis. Photo Luther H. Martin

as including also 'foster-brothers' or 'sisters' as well as members of religious associations (Philochorus, *fr.* 35). The implication is that membership in a particular *genos* might also be conferred by adoption (or initiation)—even as a fictive ancestor might be adopted to give heroic or divine legitimacy to the *genos*. Under Greek and Roman law, adoptees were fully received into the family of the adopter—and into the familial cult—and accorded full rights of inheritance, succession and divine protection.

Isocrates' account suggests, in other words, that a special relationship, claimed for the ancestral families of Eleusis and the deity Demeter, was ritually replicated in the initiations into the mysteries. In this way, initiation into the rites of Demeter established a fictive/adoptive relationship between the ancestral families of Eleusis and the initiate and, thereby, between Demeter and the initiate such as was claimed for the ancestors and the deity. At least one Hellenistic source indicates that claims to relationship with Demeter were even extended to kinship with the deity herself. According to the pseudo-Platonic dialogue *Axiochus*, dated in the second or first century BCE, Axiochus became 'kin to the gods' as a consequence of his initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries (*Axiochus* 371D). Though there is little further documentation for this view, the notion of kinship with deity through adoption/ritual initiation might have had a basis in Homer's *Odyssey*, where Menelaos is promised an afterlife on the Elysian Plain as a consequence of his adoption into the family of the gods through his marriage to Helen (*Odyssey* 4.561–569). And, of course, Paul uses the Greek juridical term for adoption to describe those redeemed by God's son as themselves adopted sons of God (Gal. 4:4–5; Rom. 8:14, 23).

The ten-day initiation rite into the Mysteries of Eleusis was celebrated in the latter part of each September. The celebration began at the Eleusinion in Athens, where a branch of the Eleusinian cult had been established and a 'lesser mysteries' celebrated each spring in deference to Athenian political dominance, but then moved in torchlight procession to Eleusis along the 'Sacred Way.' The institution of a procession from the political to the cult center was a procedure typically followed in the spread of cults too closely identified with their locale to be fully disseminated (Nilsson 1951: 16, 38). After a day of rest and fasting, the pilgrims would enter the sacred precincts of Demeter and into the *Telesterion* or the 'House of Initiation' therein for the initiation rite itself. This 'night of mysteries' was followed again by rest and finally by the return of the new initiates from this religious center of the Panhellenic world to Athens, its cosmopolitan center.

The sole requirement for initiation throughout the history of the Eleusinian mysteries (apart from such practical necessities as sufficient funds to travel to Eleusis, *per diem* and cultic expenses such as providing for the required sacrifices) was that the initiates should not have taken human life and that they speak Greek—the latter being the same linguistic criterion that defined the social boundary between Greek and barbarian generally. Thus, initiatory admission into the Eleusinian community generally supported kin-claims of 'Greekness.' To this extent, the international popularity of the Eleusinian cult during the period following the conquests of Alexander furthered his program of Hellenization and that of his successors. Whatever their attraction, celebration of the Eleusinian Mysteries retained a widespread popular appeal throughout the Roman period (Cicero *De legibus* 2.14, 36), until they were terminated by the anti-pagan decrees of Theodosius in the final decade of the fourth century.

The Mysteries of Isis

Although the worship of Isis had been familiar to Greeks since the fifth century BCE when Herodotus had identified this Egyptian deity with Demeter (Herodotus 2.42, 48, 145), the worship of Isis outside of Egypt was initially limited to associations of expatriate Egyptians. In the fourth century BCE, for example, the veneration of a pre-Hellenistic Isis is documented among some Egyptian immigrants in Piraeus, the port of Athens (Heyob 1975: 6). By the third century BCE, however, Hellenized cults of Isis are documented along the Greek coast and on some of the Greek islands (Heyob 1975: 7).

In contrast to the Mysteries of Demeter, which retained its traditional cult center at Eleusis and to which initiates were required to travel if they desired to become initiates, a non-ethnically based Hellenized Mysteries of Isis finally spread, according to Diodorus Siculus, through 'practically the entire inhabited world' (Diodorus Siculus 1.25.4)—not, however, without resistance from Rome. Given imperial suspicion of foreign or foreign-sounding associations, Rome attempted in the first century BCE to suppress the cult and again early in the first century CE. This popular cult nevertheless survived and flourished until the prohibition of paganism at the end of the fourth century CE.

The Hellenistic Mysteries of Isis shared some interesting features with that of Demeter. Whereas similarities between differing religious groups sharing a cultural context can often be accounted for by varying perspectives on common cultural problematics, those between the Demeter and Isis cults, as among a number of Hellenized native cults and religious innovations during the period, may be accounted for in part by an overt modelling of the renowned Eleusinian rites. According to Plutarch, Timotheus, a Hierophant of the Eumolpid family, had been summoned from Eleusis by Ptolemy Soter of Egypt (367/6–282 BCE) to assist the king in propagating a new cult of Serapis as Isis' consort (Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris* 28). And, in Plutarch's account, there are a number of similarities between the Hellenized myth of Isis and the version of the Demeter myth preserved in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*: Isis, like Demeter, founded her own cult after a period of sorrowful wandering; during their wanderings both goddesses came to rest by a spring in silence until taken in by the local queen as a nurse for her infant child, and, in a curious account common to both stories, the two deities burned away the mortality of their adopted child by night. Despite such common motifs, apparently borrowed from the earlier myth of Demeter, the Hellenized Mysteries of Isis retained its Egyptian 'aura' by employing iconic Egyptian motifs and by displaying sacred books purportedly written in Egyptian hieroglyphics, a language that, according to the second-century CE writer and purported initiate, Apuleius, was 'impossible to be read' by non-initiates (*Metamorphoses* 11.22).

Since Hellenistic religious groups never established any official headquarters or authority (the Eleusinian cult being an exception) which might have sent out missionaries to propagate a particular doctrine or which might have insured some measure of 'orthodoxy,' the question remains of how

Figure 3.7 Temple of Isis in Pompeii. Photo Luther J. Martin

to account for the widespread dissemination of such formerly native religious cults as that of Isis. It would seem that a number of formerly native religions might initially have developed from the Hellenistic proliferation of ethnic associations; there is no question that a 'religious' (or idealistic) dimension was 'embedded' in virtually all of these groups (Cotter 1996: 79; Kloppenborg and Wilson 1996: 18). When the ethnic or familial rationale for these ethnic societies was no longer compelling, as in the demise of the first-generation founders and/or in cases of assimilation, new members could be recruited by conferring fictive kinship status upon non-ethnic petitioners through rites of initiation modelled on the widespread juridical practice of adoption. Some of these fictive-kin societies, many of which already claimed the designation 'mystery,' may have evolved into the famous mystery cults of the Hellenistic world in which formerly familial or native deities became universalized in order to provide patronage for their clientele in an internationalized context.

The sole reason for anyone to be initiated into such a cult as that of the Egyptian Isis would be if he or she were in fact 'non-Egyptian.' Membership in the Hellenized (second century CE) Mysteries of Isis was no longer attainable, according to Apuleius' Isis novel *Metamorphoses*, by birth or by inheritance (*Metamorphoses* 11.15) but now by an initiatory rebirth (*Metamorphoses* 11.16, 21) in which Isis became recognized as the initiate's spiritual mother and the presiding priest of Isis as his spiritual father (*Metamorphoses* 11.25). An earlier story in the novel proleptically confirms this view of initiation: Venus, who is subsequently identified with Isis (*Metamorphoses* 11.2), admonished her son for his disobedience and threatened to 'produce another son much better than' him through 'adoption' and bequeathing to this adopted son her divine legacy (*Metamorphoses* 5.29).

Whereas the Mysteries of Isis, like that of Demeter, retained its character of conferring fictive kinship, at least in its initiatory discourse, the Hellenized cult of Isis thoroughly redefined the character of its formerly Egyptian deity as a 'universal queen of heaven' (*Metamorphoses* 11.2, 5). Unlike the local deities of an earlier period, Hellenistic deities like Isis came to be understood as playing a cosmic role. Thus, in contrast to an earlier Hellenistic problematic of life governed by a cosmic rule of chance or fortune, Isis was portrayed as the beneficent 'Good Fortune' that 'is not blind, but can see' (*Metamorphoses* 11.15). Initiation into the Mysteries of Isis involved, in other words, not only adoption into the 'ethnic' circle of the Hellenized Isis and the acquisition of her 'Egyptian' wisdom but also her universalized cosmic protection.

The Mysteries of Glycon

The oracle and 'mysteries' of Glycon, established in the second century CE by Alexander of Abonoteichos, offer a good example of Hellenistic religious innovation on the model of the Eleusinian mysteries. According to an exposé of Alexander by his contemporary Lucian of Samasota (*Alexander the False Prophet*), Alexander began his career as a teacher of spirituality in the tradition of Apollonius of Tyana, a first-century CE contemporary of Jesus and an itinerate, neo-Pythagorean sage, who healed the sick, exorcized demons and taught ascetic purity. Subsequently, Alexander teamed up with a certain Cocconas and the two devised an elaborate scheme to construct an oracle of 'Glycon' who they claimed was a new manifestation of Asclepius, the physician deity who cured illness by giving oracular instructions through dreams and who was most often portrayed with a serpent coiled about his staff. Following the untimely death of Cocconas, Alexander successfully established his oracle in Abonoteichus. This oracle, which involved a serpent, a puppet head controlled by hidden strings and a speaking tube, amazed the growing crowds that responded to extravagant reports that Alexander had planted throughout the empire (Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet* 15, 26).

Eventually, Alexander established 'a celebration of [the] mysteries' of Glycon over which he presided as hierophant accompanied by 'a number of would-be Eumolpids and Kerykes' but which explicitly excluded such 'atheists' as Epicureans and Christians. The rites of these mysteries included an initial proclamation 'as at Athens,' a reference to the Athenian proclamation that preceded the Eleusinian mysteries, and 'torchlight ceremonies' as in the Eleusinian celebrations

(Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet* 38–40). The widespread popularity of this cult, which was given imperial recognition by Marcus Aurelius, is corroborated by a number of gems, coins and inscriptions discovered from this period (Harmon 1925: 173).

The Mysteries of Mithras

The Mysteries of Mithras provide an example of religious innovation based on fictive claims to ethnicity. According to Plutarch, Romans were introduced to the cult of Mithras, originally an Indo-Persian deity, by Cilician pirates who had been transported to Italy following their defeat in 67 BCE by the Roman general Pompey (Plutarch, *Life of Pompey* 24). Whatever the historical origins of Roman Mithraism (Beck 2004), it is clear that the Mysteries of Mithras were one of the 'new' religions of the late Hellenistic period. Its widespread presence is documented from the second through to the fourth century CE by archaeological finds of Mithraea or Mithraic temples. While Mithraic finds are distributed throughout the Roman world, they are clustered especially in Rome and its vicinity as well as along the borders of the empire, especially along Hadrian's Wall in England, along the Rhine and Danube. This distribution of Mithraea along the boundaries of the empire but centering in Rome itself has led some to suggest that perhaps Mithraism was largely a Roman innovation rather than a cult transported from Persia. Although Persia was one of Rome's traditional enemies, this view capitalizes upon Mediterranean peoples' attraction to 'wisdom from the East'—similar to that in the modern West—an attraction which in antiquity dates from the attribution of universal wisdom to Pythagoras as the consequence of his purported travels in Egypt.

While dispersed throughout the empire, Mithraic organization was characterized by numerous small, apparently autonomous, groups. Inscriptions indicate that these Mithraic cells, similar to other religious groups of the Hellenistic period, were organized as 'brotherhoods' under the leadership of a 'father,' the highest of the seven grades of Mithraic initiation. Initiation into this brotherhood, consequently, must have had overtones of adoption into the Mithraic 'family lineage,' a fictive genealogy that claimed ancestry with the 'Persian' deity, Mithras, and, according to the name of the fifth stage of initiation, claimed Persians as ancestors. Consequently, all members of this gens (= Gk. *genos*) were,

Figure 3.8 Fresco of a Mithraic tauroctony from Marino. Photo Luther H. Martin

Figure 3.9 Mithraeum of San Clemente. Photo Luther H. Martin

in principle, eligible to achieve the highest grade of initiation, the presiding 'pater'—functionally equivalent to 'hierophant'—and to minister to his own Mithraic cell, contributing thereby to the spread of the cult.

Although the Mithraic groups seem to have shared the similarity of kin-organization, there seems to have been no unifying doctrine or system of beliefs for the cult apart from the ubiquitous presence of the tauroctony, the central cult image of Mithras slaying a bull. This sacrificial image has been identified as a 'star-map' with each of its component images, e.g. the dog, cup, scorpion, bull representing signs of the zodiac positioned with respect to the celestial equator.

Recognition of the tauroctony's representation as both sacrifice and star-map would have triggered among initiates a mental state of cognitive dissonance, a contradictory confusion that results in experiences of discomfort. A resolution of such incongruities understands the ambiguity of the tauroctony as a repetitive, serial representation of mundane existence transcended by a celestial promise that seems to be central to the Mithraic initiatory experience.

The tauroctonous cult icon clearly indicates an astrological orientation for the cult. Every Mithraeum was constructed in caves or rooms made to resemble caves (with spectacular examples of the latter to be seen in the Mithraeum of Capua Vetere and in that beneath San Clemente in Rome). These Mithraea symbolized the cosmos; their arched ceilings often decorated with planets, stars, or the signs of the zodiac.

When initiates in rites held in these Mithraea proceeded progressively through the seven grades of Mithraic initiation, they symbolically ascended a seven-runged ladder of initiation.

As a result, initiates ritually entered the astrologically constructed world of Mithraism and transcended this worldly existence with its cosmic and social problematics and symbolically entered for a time into the eighth, hypercosmic realm (Martin 2015). Mithraism thus shared with late-antique Platonism a soteriological goal of cosmic transcendence (see the reports of the neo-Platonist Porphyry on Mithraism, in Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6.22 and Porphyry, *De antro nympharum* 5–6, 15, 18, 20 and 24).

Gnostic and Hermetic traditions

At the core of those positions that may be termed 'Gnostic' is a dualistic view of the cosmos in which spirit and matter are understood to be sharply antithetical together with the conviction that the true or spiritual self is consubstantial with a spiritual reality or deity which transcends the material cosmos. This consubstantiality with a transcendent or hypercosmic deity was based on Gnostic claims to spiritual descent from and, therefore, kinship with the deity. The nature of this genealogical descent was

Figure 3.10 Mithraic 'ladder' of initiation from the Mithraeum of Felicissimus at Ostia. Photo Luther H. Martin

spelled out in various mythologies of cosmogonic fall that offered an explanation for the Gnostics' earthly existence in the flesh, governed by the senses. In a tractate representative of the 'Sethian' Gnostic tradition, we read, for example, that after the Invisible Spirit had placed Adam over the first aeon 'with the mighty one, the Autogenes, the Christ':

> [h]e placed his son Seth over the second aeon . . . And in the third aeon the seed [descendants] of Seth was placed . . . And the souls of the saints were placed (there). And in the fourth aeon the souls were placed of those who do not know the Pleroma and who did not repent at once, but who persisted for a while and repented afterwards.
>
> *(*The Apocryphon of John *II.1.9.11–22, trans. Robinson 1990: 109–110)*

If a soteriological 'restoration' was to be 'realized,' one's true origin and spiritual genealogy must be 'known.' In the famous words of Theodotus, a second-century Valentinian—one of the two major Gnostic traditions alongside the Sethian, true knowledge, is that 'of who we were, and what we have become, where we were or where we were placed, whither we hasten, from what we are redeemed, what birth is and what rebirth' (*Excerpts of Theodotus* 78.2, trans. Casey 1934). Consequently, Gnosticism explicitly represented the kinship claims characteristic of Hellenistic social groups generally but now expressed cosmologically in terms of the revival of Platonic transcendentalism in the late Hellenistic period.

Some Gnostics in third-century Rome, in fact, associated themselves with the neo-Platonic circle of Plotinus and even attended some of the philosopher's lectures (*Enneads* 2.9.10). Perhaps because of the closeness of this association, Plotinus wrote a treatise *Against the Gnostics* attempting to distinguish his teachings from theirs (*Enneads* 2.19). Whereas the Gnostics rejected this material world and, consequently, its creator as evil and developed their teachings around the theme of a hypercosmic or transcendent goal, Plotinus maintained that this creation is good and beautiful—an argument that later led Augustine to break with the Manichaean-Gnostic tradition with which he had earlier identified. And, according to the philosophers, the Gnostics complained that 'Plato had not penetrated to the depths of intelligible reality' and they appealed, consequently, to occult revelations by such figures as Zoroaster, Zostrianus, Nicotheus, Allogenes, Messos (Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 16). This claim by the Gnostics to an oral tradition of revelation allowed a degree of mythological imagination in these traditions that exceeded the rational speculations of even the most metaphysically inclined of the philosophers and was matched only in the Hermetic tradition.

Hermeticism was a philosophico-religious tradition that was similar in many ways to Gnosticism, though the oral teaching to which the Hermetists appealed was transmitted characteristically in the 'succession' of Hermes, the Greek name for the Egyptian deity Thoth (Herodotus 2.67, 138). Like the Greek Hermes, Thoth was a guide of souls, a messenger of the gods and the lord of wisdom. In addition, the Hellenistic Hermes/Thoth was considered by some to be the ruler of the heavenly bodies and of their influence on individual destiny (Fowden 1986: 22–23). Whereas the Hermetic traditions also assumed consubstantiality with a deity, many of them assumed some sort of continuity rather than dualism between matter and spirit, and employed, consequently, an 'alchemical' strategy in which matter as well as spirit might be transformed.

Though there may have been organized Gnostic and Hermetic associations, little is known of their social organization; rather their transcendental views seem to have been interpretations of existing traditions, such as Pythagoreanism, Platonism, Judaism and especially Christianity. Thus, Valentinus, one of the more well-known of the Christian Gnostics, claimed an interpretation of Christianity that was based upon direct revelation from the child *Logos*. And Theodotus wrote, with typical reference to typical Hellenistic cosmic imagery, that:

> [a] strange and new star arose doing away with the old astral decree, shining with a new unearthly light, which revolved on a new path of salvation, as the Lord himself, men's guide, who came down to earth to transfer from Fate to his providence those who believed in Christ.
>
> *(*Excerpts of Theodotus *74.2)*

Adherents of these transcendentally structured interpretations understood themselves to possess an understanding superior to that held by non-Gnostic, 'orthodox' representatives of the various traditions to which they adhered, even as Plotinus understood his philosophical interpretations to be superior to that of traditional Platonism. Nevertheless, their claims to kinship with transcendent reality, which essentially divinized the human, represented a bold, humanistic challenge to the perduring materialistic traditions of Hellenistic philosophy, and came to dominate Western philosophy and religion until the rise of modern empirical sciences.

Conclusions

The Hellenistic period was one of transition—from local kinship or ethnic identities and political organization to imperial internationalism and cosmological universalism. This new spatial expanse of terrestrial and astronomical vastness was unintelligible to the average citizen. In response to the incomprehensibility of this geographic and cosmic expansion, numerous small, special-interest groups proliferated, replicating, as it were, the small-scale social organizations of yore. The Graeco-Roman

philosophies and religions of this period belonged to this proliferation and were defined by their various understandings of and reactions to this new spatial expanse (Martin 1987). The Mysteries of Demeter, for example, retained its locative character at Eleusis, continuing to convey upon initiates, who were required to be Greek speakers, a fictive 'Greekness.' This proved to be an attraction for educated Roman subjects who were drawn to the rich achievements of Greek culture. The cult of Isis, on the other hand, developed mysteries in which the native Egyptian goddess was redefined as a celestial 'queen of heaven' and allowed her cult to migrate throughout the imperial world, as did the increasingly itinerate philosophers. The Mysteries of Mithras further imagined an initiatory process in which initiates would be able to transcend both the terrestrial and the celestial realms and enter (at least ritually) a hypercosmic domain beyond, a transcendental alternative similar to that imagined by various Gnostic movements, by the Hermetic tradition and by neo-Platonic philosophy. The alternative religious communities and teachings with their assorted locative, celestial and hypercosmical claims continued to exist side by side throughout the Graeco-Roman world until Theodosius' juridical prohibition of non-Christian practices at the end of the fourth century; the Platonic, neo-Platonic and Aristotelian philosophical traditions dominated Western thought until the rise of modern science.

Hellenistic intellectual traditions and religious practices were the forces that produced and propelled those first-century CE experiments in thought and practice that later became known collectively as 'Christian,' as well as providing the foil against which the early Christianities defined their identity. These forces and foils were diverse, only a few of which have been proposed in the previous discussion as markers on the cultural map of the Graeco-Roman world. A complete philosophical cartography for the context of the Christian beginnings must include, in addition to further discussion of the Epicurean, Stoic and Sceptic traditions (for which, see Long 1986; Adamson 2015, Pt. I), a full discussion of the emergence and influence of Hellenistic Platonism (Dillon 1977; Adamson 2015, Pt. II)—and not only the ideas of these philosophical traditions but their style of expression and argumentation as well as their real practices—and the development and use of Stoic technologies of the self in late antiquity, for example (Foucault 1986; Gill 2006). And, in addition to those religious options surveyed above, a complete cartography of the religious landscape during the Graeco-Roman period would include discussions of the introduction into the West of Hellenized rites of such cults as those of the Thracian Dionysus, of the Syrian goddess Atargatis and the Syrian Jupiter Dolichenus, and the introduction into Rome of Asclepius and of the Phrygian 'Great Mother of the Gods,' as well as of the largely neglected influence of official Roman religious practices. The web of continuities and antagonisms between all of these philosophical, religious and religio-philosophical alternatives must be precisely considered. These relationships must include not only those of thought and practice but also those of mythology and social formation. Perhaps the previous overview provides some hint of the richness and complexity of that culture which has so determined the intellectual and religious views of subsequent Western civilization, both in its own right and through that of the Christian religion from which it emerged.

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4
JEWISH TRADITION AND CULTURE

James K. Aitken

Any visitor to Rome up to the present day may gaze on the carved reliefs of the Arch of Titus in the heart of the ancient city, situated on the *Via Sacra* facing the forum. There represented on this triumphal arch, constructed posthumously to celebrate the emperor's victory over the Jews and his apotheosis (cf. Suetonius, *Titus* 1), are symbols of the Jewish Temple (the *menorah*, Torah Scrolls, *shofars* and the table for the shewbread), plundered from the Temple in 70 and subsequently brought to Rome (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 Relief on the Arch of Titus in Rome depicting the spoils of the Jerusalem Temple. Photo: J. K. Aitken

The relief encapsulates two aspects of Judaism in this period.[1] It attests to the Jewish resistance to Roman rule that was to repeat itself on several occasions, most notably in 115–18 against Trajan in the Diaspora as well as possibly in Palestine, 132–5 led by Bar Kochba in Palestine, and finally in 351 by Patricius in Palestine. The destruction of the Temple in 70 CE and, following the Bar Kochba revolt, the exclusion of Jews from Aelia Capitolina, the colony founded on the site of Jerusalem by Hadrian, required a consolidation and realignment of some major aspects of religious practice. However, the relief also attests to the very prominence of Jews in the Roman empire and beyond. They were important enough to be portrayed on a major monument in the very centre of the Roman empire. Their large numbers, estimated at eight or nine per cent of the population in the Roman empire alone (Horbury 1991: 40), gave them power and influence, of which some Christians could only be envious (see, e.g. Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 18.8; 21.1), and also ensured that they were a force to be reckoned with when in revolt. The large geographical spread of the Jewish communities meant that Jewish life and religion continued and was sustained without serious upheaval following the destruction of the Temple. The consolidation required was eased by the continuance of traditions and religious life in places with well-established Jewish communities outside as well as inside of Palestine.

The distribution of Jewish communities

In what is certainly an exaggeration (see Stern 1974: 119, 122) the first-century Alexandrian writer Philo records the total number of Egyptian Jews alone at one million (*In Flaccum* 43), an excessive figure matched only by the historian Josephus's similar massaging of numbers (e.g. *Jewish War* 2.561, 7.368). Such figures have led scholars earlier this century to estimate the total number of Jews in the Diaspora as running into many millions by the first century CE (e.g. Juster 1914: 209–12). The truth is that we can never be certain,[2] but both are probably correct to aim at a figure in the several millions, and it is likely that Jews outnumbered Christians in the Roman empire into the fourth century, if not later. The description in Acts 2:5–9 of Jews 'from every nation under heaven', and the listing of the many nations, indicate that Jews were considered at least to be all over the known world in the first century. Philo's figure for Egyptian Jews does indicate that they were a significant proportion of the population and that they were a comparatively old and established group in both Alexandria and Egypt (for a full history, see Modrzejewski 1991).

Outside of Rome, Egypt and Palestine where there were large communities, we must rely on non-literary remains and especially inscriptions and some synagogue sites. Recent publications and editions of inscriptions (e.g. Horbury and Noy 1992; Noy 1993, 1995) have helped our task, but even then it can be difficult to identify what is Jewish and what is not (cf. Kraemer 1991: 141–62). We can deduce much, nonetheless, of the cultural life and interaction with Christianity for the third to fifth centuries from the art and architecture of synagogues and of the Roman catacombs. It seems that by the first century, Jews were spread across the west coast of Italy, Cyrenaica in north Africa, Egypt, Palestine, all of Greece and Asia Minor, in the Bosphorus region on the north of the Black Sea and throughout the Parthian empire in the east. During the following centuries, we have evidence of Jewish presence further west, across the north coast of Africa and penetrating further into north and south Italy, France and Spain, as well as south into Arabia and Yemen.

Beyond the bounds of the Roman empire there existed large communities of Jews throughout Mesopotamia and Babylonia, a region for which we have greater literary evidence. The Jews in this region seem to have had sustained contact with Christians and held some political force, stationed as they were under the opponents of the Roman empire and with an interest in Palestine (see Goodblatt 2006). We should not forget either the large Jewish communities in Syria on the frontier of the empire. These communities are particularly important, being in areas where early Christian communities also arose and where Jews shared a common language of Aramaic (or Syriac in its Christian dialect). Although our knowledge is very limited for this area, we may surmise that there was close and long-standing contact

between the two communities there. The close contact between Syrian Christianity and Judaism in Antioch in the second to fourth centuries has already been documented (Fiensy 1985). Certain possibly Jewish elements in the Syrian liturgy (see Gelston 1992: 23) and the tradition of reading two lessons from the Hebrew Bible may be added to this evidence (Jammo 1979: 108; cf. Acts 13:15). Contact and mutual influence may have continued in this region until well into the fourth century, and Fiensy draws attention to Chrysostom's need to preach to the Christians in Antioch (in *c.* 386 CE) in order to dissuade them from attendance at the synagogue (1985: 215–19). Whilst the Syriac version of the Hebrew Bible, known as the Peshitta, was translated from a Hebrew text, it was, surprisingly, preserved by the eastern churches alone.

Given the broad spread of Jewish communities, it is not possible to write a comprehensive synthesis of tradition and culture without some recognition of diversity. We should, however, be careful not to produce artificial divisions. Traditions and customs probably varied from town to town and country to country (cf. Rajak and Noy 1993: 75–93), dependent on the local situation, and it is not to be expressed in terms of a Diaspora–Palestine divide. It is perhaps artificial to envisage a Mediterranean Diaspora, rather than Mediterranean Jewish life as a whole (including Palestine), or the Roman empire as a place of lived experience (cf. Schwartz 2009). Amidst the diversity within Judaism certain themes constantly come to the fore as concerns for both Diaspora and Palestinian Jews. This has been succinctly put as 'the Pentateuchally based constitutional ideal of a holy nation governed within the covenant by high priest and king' (Horbury 1998a: 6). The ideals of a holy nation, self-government and a coming messiah or divine kingdom might in part account for the Jewish revolts, the art and images, the liturgical language, the literary production, the contact with non-Jews and the status placed on the patriarch and rabbis. At the same time, the aspirations and ideals, the art and literature, form part of wider Mediterranean cross-cultural traditions.

The Jews under Roman rule

The numbers of Jews around the Mediterranean ensured that when they revolted in one country it was of concern to the Roman authorities, especially as it meant that a revolt in one city or region could easily spread to another, as seems to have been the case in the revolts under Trajan of 115–17 CE. The revolts should, however, be seen in broad terms in the context of the Roman empire. One could point to Jewish dissatisfaction with an earthly ruler in place of a theocratic state, and indeed messianic hopes might have fuelled many of the revolts (see, e.g. Hengel 1961, 1983). But socio-economic factors play an equally important role. It is, therefore, instructive to note the factors that bear on most revolts in the Roman empire. Dyson (1975) in particular has demonstrated how native revolts in the Roman empire follow certain forms, and although he does not discuss the Jewish revolts, they could easily be included within this pattern (see Cohen 1986: 43–4). Revolts usually were instigated both by landless peasants, often forming bands of brigands, and by local aristocracy who had their own grievances against the Romans, whilst heavy Roman taxation causing economic distress for all provided an added incentive. In addition, and of particular moment in any comparison with the Jewish revolts, is the observation that religious 'messianic' speculation, or at least national aspirations, fuelled native revolts (for differing views of the evidence, see Goodman 2007; Horbury 2014). In 69 CE, at the time of the Jewish revolt in Judaea, Vespasian was forced to begin his rule as emperor by putting down a revolt that had arisen in Gaul led by Julius Civilis with the support of the Druids. It appears that the Druids, according to the Roman historian Tacitus (*Histories* 4.54.2), predicted the destruction of Rome and the rule of empire falling into the control of transalpine Gaul (Cohen 1986: 44). Tacitus notes similar aspirations being banded abroad in the first Jewish revolt against Rome (*Histories* 5.13.2; cf. Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.312–13).

The enduring effect of the first three Jewish revolts against Rome, in addition to the warning they sent regarding the strength of the Jews, was the consequences it had for Jewish political and religious life. The first revolt against Rome (66–72) had the support of both the upper and lower classes

of society, each of whom had something to gain. The burden of heavy taxation and poor Roman administration as factors are signalled by the burning of public archives, including money-lenders' bonds, at the start of the war (Josephus *Jewish War* 2.427). It also appears that by the outbreak of the revolt, Jewish society in Palestine had broken down into factional disputes and violence, and that the ruling class had lost any claim to authority in the eyes of the people (Goodman 1987; Price 1992; but contrast Goodman 2007). The defeat of the Jewish forces and the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE ended Jewish political independence and brought to an end the role of the Temple as the religious centre and source of priestly power. From this point, the new centre of learning and the base from which a new system of leadership began to grow was Jamnia (Yavneh) to the west of Jerusalem, followed by Galilee and in time Babylonia.

Although it is unlikely that the Jews in Palestine participated in the revolts against Rome that arose in various countries in the time of Trajan (115–17), they did revolt once again with disastrous results in 132–5. Little is known of the revolts in 115–17 because of the lack of historical sources, but it seems they began in Egypt or at least in Cyrene and then continued into Egypt (see Smallwood 1981: 389–427) and Cyprus, perhaps motivated by general revolts in Mesopotamia (on which see Barnes 1989: 145–62). Slightly more evidence is available for the years 132–5, thanks to some manuscript and coin finds, although it is still not possible to reconstruct with any certainty the causes and order of events (see Mor 2016). The revolt appears to have been led by the figure of Bar Kochba ('son of the star'), whose name in rabbinic texts suggests that he was presented by some as a messianic figure, derived from an interpretation of the star in Num. 24:17 (cf. Septuagint). We know that Jewish messianic and some apocalyptic speculation existed at the time (e.g. *Sibylline Oracle* 5), and some of the symbolism on the coins of the period (apparently used as a means of propaganda) could be so interpreted (Meshorer 1982: 138–50). Nevertheless, we cannot say whether he saw himself as a messiah or indeed if he actually instigated the revolt or merely became its champion. There had already been unrest in Palestine in the years before the outbreak of the revolt, perhaps accounting for intense road building in 120–30 (Isaac and Oppenheimer 1985: 50–1), and some economic hardship may have been felt by the Jewish peasantry (Applebaum 1976: 15–17), although this is disputed (Mildenberg 1984: 84–94). It is also possible that the emperor Hadrian had planned before the revolt to rebuild Jerusalem as the Hellenistic city Aelia Capitolina (Dio Cassius, *Epitome* 69.12; see Smallwood 1981: 431–4). Whatever Hadrian's precise plans were, after decisively defeating the Jews in Palestine he was able to found Aelia Capitolina. Jews were officially (if not in practice) excluded from entry into the city, and were not allowed onto the Temple mount up until the fourth century, and even then only on the commemoration day of the destruction of the Temple. After 135, the majority of the Jewish population in Palestine lived in Galilee in the north and not Judaea, and consequently the centre of Jewish life moved to there, to Usha (until *c.* 170), then Beth Shearim and Sepphoris, and eventually, from the middle of the third century, Tiberias. It was also at this point that the Roman province was named Syria Palaestina, and from this name we can legitimately call the region Palestine. Another consequence of the revolt was that many people, including rabbis, fled to Babylonia for safety and remained there afterwards. Babylonia already had had for many centuries a sizeable Jewish population since the exile of 586–38 BCE, but this new wave of settlers ensured its establishment as the centre, along with Palestine, of Jewish learning and literary activity.

The rabbinic movement

It used to be held that the period of putative Jewish self-government in Jamnia following the fall of the Temple was formative for later Judaism, some even speaking of a synod meeting there, on the model of early church synods. The fixing of the Hebrew canon, the exclusion of Christianity from Judaism and the codification of Jewish law were all activities traditionally ascribed to Jamnia. This picture now seems far from satisfactory. From the perspective of someone living at that time, it would not have been clear until after the Bar Kochba revolt that the Temple would not be rebuilt. Tradition

has it that Yohanan ben Zakkai was granted permission by Vespasian to establish an academy in the city of Jamnia, a small concession to the Jews (for discussion, see Saldarini 1975; Cohen 1984). The group that formed there was probably small and had little influence initially, but it appears that its teachings and decisions eventually became definitive and were incorporated into the foundational literature of the Judaism of this period, rabbinic Judaism. It probably took centuries for rabbinic Judaism as we now know it to become normative, and diversity, reflected in art, literature and language, can be found even in places of rabbinic influence.

Neusner has drawn attention to the fact that the discontinuity from the pre-70 era would not have been felt at Jamnia, but that the real historical break would have been in *c.* 140 with the re-establishment of the rabbis in the north after the devastation of southern Palestine (1971: vol. 3, 282–3). Our sources are primarily the rabbinic documents themselves, which are ideological and generally written or compiled much later than the time of which they are writing. They do, nonetheless, attest to the development of this rabbinic Judaism. The title 'rabbi' as a specific designation rather than as a polite form of address (as it is used in the Gospels) implies a new consciousness, and this appears to have been an established usage by the second century. A well-known dictum in the *Tosefta* (*Eduy* 3.4) indicates this self-consciousness:

> He who has students who in turn have students of their own is called a Rabbi. If his students are forgotten, he is called Rabban; if even the students of his students are already forgotten, he is called by his name [alone].

The rabbinic literature presents the rabbis as direct inheritors of the wisdom and law imparted to Moses by God at Sinai, and passed on through the chain of Pharisees (Mishnah *Aboth* 1). Certainly, some of the rabbis had connections with Pharisaism, but it should not be pushed too strongly (Cohen 1984). The study of the Bible and the law contained therein became a central aspect of rabbinic Judaism, as well as the very importance of study itself, in a way that it had not in Pharisaism.

From the second century, there arose the office of head of the Palestinian Jewish community, known in Greek as 'ethnarch' or 'patriarch' and in Hebrew as the *nasi* 'prince'. The details of the origins and status of the ethnarch are disputed (see Jacobs 1995: 1–9; Hezser 1997: 405–49). It was probably in Galilee that limited Jewish self-government was restored after Bar Kochba and the ethnarch gradually rose to prominence and stature. Perhaps in response to the rise of the ethnarch, an exilarchate was also established in the eastern Diaspora. The ethnarchs seem to have amassed great wealth and privilege, and behaved in a royal fashion, even seeing themselves as descendants of David. Origen in the third century confirms their royal manner, although his report that they tried capital cases may be an exaggeration of this (*Epistles* 1, 14). Such royal aspirations would have befitted the climate of the second century and the hopes of some Jewish circles (see Goodblatt 1984: 113–32). In the manner of the Roman *salutatio*, the ethnarch had clients who would pay their daily respects (e.g. *j.Shabbat* 12.3, 13c), whilst the local communities had to pay taxes for his upkeep (*Codex Theodosianus* 16.8.14, 16.8.29). His prime functions appear to have been judicial and legal, and he was assisted in this by a council of advisors. It is therefore appropriate that our first definitive ethnarch in the sources is Judah I (Judah Ha-Nasi) from the beginning of the third century, who is said to be responsible for the compilation of the major Jewish legal work, the Mishnah. The importance of the ethnarch is probably to be seen in the fact that after Bar Kochba there were no more Jewish revolts until the fourth century, and even then there was only one minor revolt, and it was not supported by the ethnarch. The authority of the ethnarch coupled with the appointment of high-ranking Roman governors in Palestine allowed for a time of peace and stability.

Jewish literature

Whilst the destruction of the Temple in 70 was not the end of Jewish religion and some no doubt considered it merely an interlude until the Temple would be rebuilt, as had happened before, it has

left its mark on the literature in a number of ways. In the first place, the centre of Jewish literary activity increasingly shifted towards the east and to the population in Babylonia, although northern Palestine remained of equal importance in this respect. These twin centres were responsible for the production from the fifth century onwards of the Hebrew and Aramaic works, the Talmuds (one Palestinian and one Babylonian), and various exegetical commentaries on scripture (*midrashim*), incorporating ideas that had developed over the centuries. It also led to greater attention being focused on the activities of the synagogue and its role in education. The oral exposition of the Bible in the synagogue was eventually written down in the form of targumim, whilst paintings and mosaics depicted the same themes that were being expounded. There seems to have developed at the same time a move towards the compiling and editing of different traditions, perhaps local traditions, and finding a resolution between opposing opinions. This editorial work and the compilation of principally legal traditions found its expression in rabbinic literature.

Rabbinic literature

The one document above all others that came to predominate in Judaism after the Muslim conquest, both in itself and in its application in the Talmuds, was the Mishnah (meaning 'study' or 'oral tradition'). How this text came about, how representative it is of Judaism in the early centuries, and why it became normative are puzzles that none can satisfactorily answer. It is a compilation of legal rulings and sayings, often attributed to rabbis of the first two centuries CE, and tradition has it that it was put together by R. Judah the Prince (Ha-Nasi) in *c.* 200. It is clear that the Mishnah contains early traditions, but it is no easy task to determine the dates of the various traditions or even to confirm the date for the redaction of the Mishnah as 200 CE. Evidence of a non-rabbinic stream in Judaism can now be seen in the discovery of certain Second Temple texts (the Damascus Document, Aramaic Levi and the Wisdom of Ben Sira) in a medieval synagogue in Cairo (the Cairo Genizah). It seems that these texts, one sectarian and one disapproved of by the rabbis (see *b.Sanhedrin* 100b), indicate that even marginal works were copied and read throughout antiquity. The Mishnah is a legal text, concentrating on issues on which there is the greatest disagreement. What it omits may be ideas so central to Jewish belief that they do not need mentioning (cf. Sanders 1990: 330). It should not be taken as definitive of Judaism in the time from which it arises.

At some point after the completion of the Mishnah, the *Tosefta* (meaning 'addition, supplement') was compiled. This is a collection of books containing additional legal material to the Mishnah, and it is clear that it is closely related (in time and content) to the Mishnah. That much is evident in its naming of the same rabbis, its corresponding structure and its use of a similar Hebrew combined with occasional Aramaic words and Greek and Latin loan-words (see Stemberger 1996a: 149–63). Other legal works that were redacted in this period are the *Tannaitic* or *halakic midrashim*, which are exegetical commentaries (*midrashim*) on the biblical books Exodus to Deuteronomy. Although the rabbis named in these *midrashim* are from the Tannaitic period (i.e. from the first to the beginning of the third century), it seems likely that they were redacted after this period, even if it is not possible to give any certain dating.

One of the earliest *halakic midrashim* is known as the *Mekhilta* (meaning 'rule') *of Rabbi Ishmael*, comprising a commentary on portions of Exod. 12:1 through to 35:3. Various features suggest that it derives from an early period (Lauterbach 1933: xix–xx), although it appears to have undergone a series of redactions. It is an important work as it demonstrates the complexity of the legal tradition in this time, as well as providing many examples of early biblical exegesis, often sharing interpretations with the Aramaic targumim. Extensive passages discuss features of the biblical text, applying it to contemporary belief, often without reference to legal issues at all. The discussion of Exodus 15, the 'Song of Moses', is a case in point (recorded in tractate *Shirata* of the *Mekhilta*). In that section, the *Mekhilta* discusses at length God's role as a warrior, his dominance over earthly powers, his redemptive qualities and the prediction of the destruction of foreign nations. It also draws attention

many times to the use of the imperfect verbs in the text, which can be translated with a future sense (as well as a present), and thereby adds a prophetic sense to the words: e.g. '*Thou overthrowest them that rise up against thee* [Exod. 15:7], It is not written *harasta* "Thou hast overthrown", but *taharos* "Thou wilt overthrow", in the future. For it is said, "Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth" (Ps. 58:7)' (*Shirata* 6.64–66). These are themes, typical of apocalyptic literature, that often seem to be lacking in other literature from this period, but attest to the zealous nature of Judaism at this time. The *Mekhilta* has, therefore, preserved for us evidence of the breadth of thought and of the variety of streams that continued through this time.

Another type of *midrash* that is primarily exegetical rather than legal in nature begins to appear in the course of this period. In the first half of the fifth century, comments on the biblical text of Genesis were compiled to form what is known as *Genesis Rabbah* (= 'great'), a name that perhaps suggests that there was at one time a 'smaller' commentary on Genesis. Probably from the same period comes *Lamentations Rabbah*, a commentary on the text of Lamentations. In view of the content of the biblical book, this commentary contains stories of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 and other times of crisis, including the Bar Kochba revolt and tales of martyrdom. Many of these are fabulous rather than historical.

The Aramaic targumim

As Hebrew began to die out as a spoken language and be replaced by Aramaic, the need arose to give a translation into Aramaic of the Scriptures as they were read in the synagogue. They are to be distinguished from the *midrashim* in that they are primarily translations, but they include many interpretative elements (cf. Jesus' exposition of the biblical text in the synagogue according to Luke 4:16–22). This (probably oral) translation was called targum (cf. Ezra 4: 7), and the targumim (to use the plural) came to be written down over time. Our first Aramaic translations appear as early as the first century BCE (as attested by a Qumran text of Job), but the written forms of most of the targumim now extant are very late. Even the Palestinian targumim to the Pentateuch (and notably *Neofiti*), which were thought possibly to contain Second Temple traditions, can be dated late on the basis of the language (Kaufman 1994). The importance of the targumim as witnesses is that they preserve many non-rabbinic traditions not found in other literature, and they are as important as the rabbinic texts for the study of Jewish biblical exegesis in Christian works (see Hayward 1987: 105–23). They also attest to the multilingual environment in which learned Jews operated (Smelik 2013).

Greek literature

The last great Jewish writers in Greek in antiquity were probably the philosopher Philo and the historian Josephus. They both interpret and expound the Greek Bible, Philo particularly reading it in terms of Greek (and especially Stoic) philosophy and Josephus in terms of history. It remains a puzzle, however, that hardly any Jewish literature in Greek has survived from after the beginning of the second century, some of the last being the translation 4 Ezra and the Stoic 4 Maccabees. The majority of Jewish inscriptions are Greek and Jewish translators were still operative in the second century (Aquila, Symmachus). It raises the question of whether this is a matter of chance or indicative that no such literature was ever produced. It would seem unlikely that Jews were not writing literature in Greek, especially since Christian authors, with whom it is clear they were in contact, were doing so (Carleton Paget 2010: 409–13).[3] In some Jewish literature, Hebrew was considered the sacred language, described as the language of the sanctuary (*Targum Ps.–Jonathan* to Gen. 42:23 and 45:12) and the language of creation (*Testament of Naphtali* 8:3ff.; *Targum Ps.–Jonathan* to Gen. 11:1; *j.Megillah* 1.2). Greek, however, was the prime language of the Roman Empire, especially in the east where it had been the long-established *lingua franca* (see Horrocks 2010: 125–6). The Roman biographer Suetonius even has the Emperor Claudius remark on a barbarian's command of both

Latin and Greek – 'you know both our languages [*utroque sermone nostro*]' (*Claudius* 42.2). As much as biblical Greek is no longer to be seen as a peculiar dialect used by Jews, so too the Greek employed by Jews in Rome did not differ from that used by other Romans or Christians (Rutgers 1995), even if the translation of the Bible sanctioned for Jews was that by Aquila.

Greek was held in special regard by some Jews since, in an interpretation based on Gen. 9:27, certain rabbis declare that the language of Japhet (i.e. Greek) 'is to be found in the tents of Shem' (*Megillah* 9b and cf. *j.Megillah* 1.71c; see Lévinas 1984: 331–69). Even the Mishnah allows for the liturgical prayers the *Shema'* and *Eighteen Benedictions* to be recited in Greek, and from the period of the sixth century, Justinian intervened in a dispute in a synagogue (perhaps in Byzantium) over those wishing the readings in Greek and those in Hebrew (*Novella* 146; see De Lange 2015: 60–7). There probably was other Jewish literature in Greek in this period, but the dominance of the rabbinic tradition has prevented its preservation. We have already seen that non-rabbinic texts have by chance been preserved in the Cairo Genizah, substantiating the claim that texts were in use even if they had been disapproved of by the rabbis. Further evidence from the Cairo Genizah comes in the form of Greek texts (albeit in some instances only glosses in Greek) dating from the tenth to twelfth centuries, including a translation into Greek of Ecclesiastes (De Lange 1996). Indeed, there are many traces of ongoing use of Greek biblical versions by Jews into the Byzantine period (De Lange *et al.* 2009).

Greek enabled writers to express themselves more articulately, whether they were Jewish or not. Both Jewish-Greek writers and the rabbis were concerned with the exposition of the Bible and its law, containing both prophetic hopes and religious requirements. The rabbinic literature indeed is suffused with Hellenic culture, visible in its mode of argumentation, its thought and its very vocabulary (see especially Schäfer 1998: 1–3). The Greek age should probably, therefore, be seen as extending as far as the Arab conquest (Kamesar 1990: 576–7; De Lange 1998–99: 23), and in that the rabbinic literature is a part. The rabbinic literature is as much a part of Greek culture as Philo or Origen; our only loss is that we do not have the truly Greek literature that Jews may well have written at that time.

Apocalyptic literature

The defeat of the Jews in the revolt of 66–72 and the loss of the Jerusalem Temple were felt by many to be a major religious catastrophe and they sought theological expression in the writing of apocalypses (e.g. the New Testament book of Revelation). The apocalypse of Ezra (4 Ezra) was probably composed towards the end of the first century, the writer himself declaring that the vision came in the thirteenth year after the destruction of Jerusalem (3.1). It is now extant only in Latin and Syriac translations, most likely deriving from a Greek translation of a Semitic original. It appears to be dependent on a slightly earlier work, the Apocalypse of Baruch (or 2 Baruch). Both works are concerned with the question of theodicy and express the belief that God will shortly intervene, destroying the Roman empire and bringing to an end the reign of the victorious conqueror, portrayed as an 'eagle' in 4 Ezra 11–12. This will be followed by a temporary messianic age and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth (see Stone 1989). It is possible that 2 Baruch, as argued by Murphy (1985), opposes any form of armed resistance to Rome, conceding the struggle to God alone, which would be in opposition to those who continued to resist until the time of Bar Kochba.

In 4 Ezra's eschatology, the law is presented as a guarantor of God's mercy and of the continuance of Jewish life and religion (7.36–38, 70–74, 79–101). Although this could be seen as 'pivotal' in the development of Judaism after 70 (Esler 1994: 125–8), this would imply 4 Ezra was the last of the Jewish apocalypses, paving the way for Torah-centred rabbinic Judaism. It is true that 4 Ezra is related in certain exegetical and theological themes with rabbinic literature (Stone 1990: 38–9), although the mode of expression and the message are utterly different from the Mishnah. Neusner, for example, draws attention to how remarkable is 'the Mishnah's utter silence on these tremendous issues of suffering and atonement, catastrophe and apocalypse, expressed with such power [in the apocalypses]' (1981: 37). It has already been seen, however, that the Mishnah should not be taken as representative

of all Jewish thought in this period. There appears to have been a resurgence of the writing of Jewish apocalyptic after 500 CE, and from then to the medieval period we have many examples of the genre, including the *Book of Zerubbabel*, the *Prayer of R. Simeon b. Yohai* and *3 Enoch* (Alexander 1990: 197–218; Trebolle Barrera 1998: 448–50). The connection between such works and the classical apocalypses is uncertain. Although it is possible that Christian apocalyptic was the mediator from which Judaism drew its inspiration for these late apocalypses, it is feasible that there was a line of continuity from the ancient to the medieval period that has been obscured in our sources. Once again, the Aramaic targumim provide partial evidence for this, where we find two apocalyptic passages that have been composed in a similar manner to their first-century counterparts. The targum to Lam. 4:21–2 describes the Parthians devastating Rome, which implies that this text dates from a tradition before 224 CE, when the Parthian empire came to an end. And in *Targum Ps.–Jonathan* to Num. 24:19–24 there is a triumphant declaration of the destruction of Rome and Constantinople, perhaps originating as an apocalypse on the destruction of Rome, to which were added references to Constantinople. These passages recall the early medieval apocalyptic texts, but may well date from the time when it is often believed that Jewish apocalypses did not exist. Furthermore, we have already seen that the *Mekhilta*, which probably dates from the third century, contains many of the themes that Neusner says are expressed with such power in the apocalypses. One need only read a passage such as tractate *Shirata* 4:19–29, commenting on Exod. 15:3 ('The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is his name') to gain a taste of these ideas.

One may ask whether Christian interpretation of Jewish apocalypses may help us to reconstruct something of the Jewish understanding towards apocalypses in this period. Frankfurter has, for example, speculated regarding the relationship between Jewish apocalypses and heretical Christian groups, the Gnostics on the one hand, and wise men and sages on the other (1996: 196–8). If apocalypses were particularly associated with sectarian groups, this may in part account for its lack of prominence in Jewish thought at the time. Scholem, who saw some of the roots of the Jewish mystical tradition in the ancient apocalypses, felt that apocalyptic was greatly reduced, preserved as part of an esoteric movement, but that with the eventual acceptance of messianism apocalyptic movements were able to resurge (1961: 73–5). Whatever the real explanation is, Judaism never lost hope in the power of God to intervene and restore the former kingdom in Jerusalem. Such beliefs are encapsulated in the targum translation to Isaiah (Chilton 1982), perhaps dating from the early second century, and in the *Eighteen Benedictions*, the most important prayer in Jewish liturgy. The detailed prescriptions for the Temple services and priestly duties contained within the Mishnah may also have been preserved because of a strong belief in an immanent reversal of the present situation. Even if there was no specific apocalyptic genre, apocalyptic beliefs and expressions continued to be uttered.

Proselytes and godfearers

The position of proselytes and godfearers and what they may tell us of Judaism in antiquity are greatly disputed issues. There seems to have been a rapid spread of Jewish communities across the Roman empire which has to be accounted for by factors greater than Goodman's reference to Jewish 'opposition to abortion, infanticide, and contraception' (1994: 84; cf. Tacitus *Histories* 5.5). It seems likely that there was some form of mission or promulgation of the attractive elements in Judaism, even if not universally practised (Carleton Paget 1996: 65–103, esp. 82–3). Many have assumed that there was active Jewish proselytism in the Second Temple period (e.g. Feldman 1993, with bibliography on pp. 555–6), whilst others have suggested it only came about in the second and third centuries CE (e.g. Goodman 1994: 122–4, who presents it as a response to Christianity), or that it never existed at all (Will and Orrieux 1992). There is no precise missionary strategy evident and many texts do not appear to be interested in the question, but that does not mean that some Jewish circles did not seek converts. Jewish disapproval of gentile idolatry (e.g. Wisdom of Solomon 13–15), Jewish-Greek literature extolling Jewish virtues (e.g. *Letter of Aristeas*) and the openness to proselytes

expressed in some works (e.g. *Eighteen Benedictions* no. 13; 2 Baruch 41.4–6 and 42.3) imply if not a proselytic mission, a promotion of ideas by Jews from early on (see Carleton Paget 1996: 83–7). The adoption of Jewish practices by non-Jews is implied by the term 'godfearers', if the group even existed (Feldman 1993: 342–3 is sceptical). By the third century (or maybe fourth; see Botermann 1993: 184–94), such a group appears in Aphrodisias (Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987), but before that the term is used rather inconsistently (e.g. Acts 10: 1–2, 13, 16, 26, 43, 50) and is applied by Josephus to both Jews and Gentiles (*Jewish Antiquities* 7.130; 12.285; *Against Apion* 2.140). Perhaps there were sympathizers who followed Jewish religious practice without full conversion, although many have pointed to the lack of evidence for such groups (e.g. Kraabel 1981: 113–26) in the context of the ancient Mediterranean where many were cautious to appease any gods of the locality or gods whom they may have neglected (cf. the altar to an unknown god in Acts 17: 23). Gentile adherents to Judaism is a possibility.

Goodman's willingness to see Jewish proselytism from the second to third centuries onwards may be supported by evidence found in the targumim. Abraham's calling upon the name of God at Beer-Sheba (Gen. 21:33) was an opportunity for the targumists to speak of conversion to Judaism (contrast Philo, *de Plant*. 73–89, and Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 1.207–12; Hayward 1998: 29–31). All the Palestinian targumim on Gen. 21:33 present Abraham informing strangers about the God of Israel (Hayward 1998: 31–6). One of them (*Ps.–Jonathan*) is more educative than missionary in intent, presenting him as a preacher. Others (*Targum Neofiti*, its glosses and the *Fragment Targums*) share traditions with the Talmud and Midrash and present Abraham as a proselytizer, associating Abraham's preaching at Beer-Sheba with the observance of worship and prayer. These traditions seem to be no earlier than the fourth century and suggest that synagogues of the time that used these targums (which ones and where we cannot say) took great interest in the matter of proselytes (Hayward 1998: 37). Synagogues may not have been missionary institutions as such (McKnight 1991: 62–6), but the activity in them and the preaching may have been used to draw attention to the religion (cf. Carleton Paget 1996: 84, n. 78). Philo even says that on the Sabbath the synagogue 'stands wide open' (Philo *de Specialibus Legibus* 2: 62–3; cf. later Jerome and John Chrysostom). As we shall see, their magnificence, size and decoration would have further drawn attention to Judaism. It may be significant that from the period when Goodman sees the appearance of proselytism, there also developed a tradition of Jewish pictorial art and the finest examples of ancient synagogues begin to be found.

Synagogues and services

The precise historical origins of the synagogue are lost to us, but certainly by the time of the fall of the Second Temple it had become an established institution throughout the Diaspora, and, with the loss of the Temple, stimulus would have been given in Palestine to develop its use into a place of worship and to replace there the older 'prayer houses' (*proseuchai*). Some synagogues were clearly very impressive structures. The destroyed synagogue/basilica in Alexandria was lauded by the Babylonian Talmud (*Sukkah* 51b), 'He who has never seen the double colonnade of Alexandria has never seen the glory of Israel in his life', and such claims can now be substantiated by the excavation of synagogues in the Diaspora. The synagogue at Sardis, in what is now western Turkey, dating from the second or third century and destroyed in 616, is perhaps the largest that we have surviving (see Figure 4.2). Measuring over 90 metres in length, it appears to have had a different use as a public building before being converted into a synagogue.

Synagogues were used as assembly halls for the local communities so that it was necessary for them to be of a suitable size, and their architectural plan was generally modelled on Graeco-Roman meeting halls, large areas divided by supporting columns and benches along the sides (see Levine 2005). The Galilean synagogue at Hammath-Tiberias with its rich mosaic floor was probably also a magnificent building (see Figure 4.3), whilst that of the Roman harbour at Ostia displays the elegance of first-century design.

Figure 4.2 The synagogue forecourt and public fountain in Sardis, with a view into the large main sanctuary; photo: J. J. Meggitt

Figure 4.3 The synagogue at Hammath-Tiberias. Photo: G. I. Davies

There is no consistent plan for a synagogue design, and great variety in architecture and style exists across the Mediterranean. Kraabel has argued that such synagogues had a social purpose in a Graeco-Roman context in providing an architectural symbol of the community, a form of social cohesion in

the manner of voluntary associations (1987: 49–54). Certainly, the size and splendour of some of the buildings denoted the prominence of Jews in these locales, and the designs were probably eclectic, drawing upon various local and traditional influences. Evidence from inscriptions suggests that the organization and structures of authority of synagogues varied considerably from place to place (Rajak and Noy 1993: 75–93), and although attempts have been made to see church structure as deriving from the synagogue (e.g. Burtchaell 1992), the variation does not allow for any certainty on this. Christianity can at least be said to partake of the same cultural tradition, embodied in elaborate buildings and decoration, prayers and scripture readings, and the presence of gentile adherents.

Synagogues and art

The development of Jewish iconographic art from the third century seems to have centred on the synagogue, although it is not restricted to it. Biblical themes were often depicted in the art, sometimes sharing motifs from interpretations in rabbinic and targumic texts, and often the same stories recurred in different places (e.g. the sacrifice of Isaac). Some of the finest examples of Jewish art work are the frescoes on the walls of the synagogue of Dura Europos on the Euphrates and in the Roman catacombs. But not all the representations were religious.

The primary purpose of the artistic representations is most likely decorative. Whilst they pose a problem for the prohibition on graven images (Exod. 20:4–5), which could be interpreted as anti-idolic rather than anti-iconic (Fine 2010), they contribute to the sacrality of the synagogue

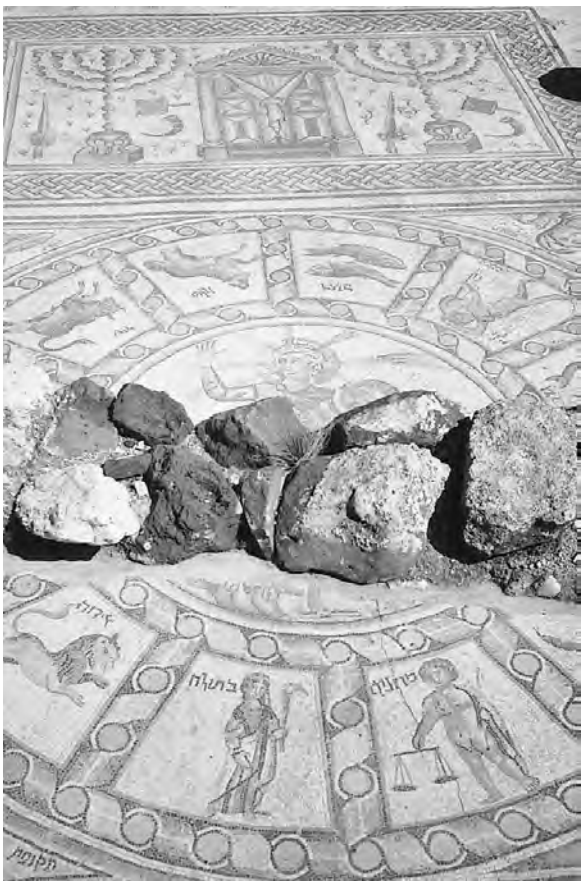

Figure 4.4 The Zodiac mosaic of the synagogue at Hammath-Tiberias. Photo G. I. Davies

buildings (Fine 2010; cf. Schwartz 2001: 243–63). They do also show that synagogues participated in local traditions and were supported by local sponsors rather than being under rabbinic authority or jurisdiction.

Having no tradition of figurative art, the Jews naturally drew upon the art of their surrounding cultures and especially Hellenic art (cf. the art in the tombs of Beth Shearim in Jerusalem). One striking example of this is the appearance of the signs of the zodiac in four synagogues in Palestine, ranging in date from the fourth to the sixth centuries: at Hammath-Tiberias (see Figure 4.4), Beth-Alpha, Huseifa and Na'aran. Evidence of the use of the zodiac can also be found at Susiya and En Gedi. This depiction of the calendar was adopted by Jews, and particularly displayed in synagogues, to represent the annual cycle of festivals. The decorative had also become symbolic (Hachlili 1977: 61–77).

Amongst the various motifs and objects that are depicted in the art, symbols of particular importance in Judaism frequently appear. The Ark for the scrolls, the *menorah* (seven-branched candlestick; see Figure 4.5), ritual utensils (e.g. incense shovel) and festival items (e.g. the *lulav* and *ethrog* from the Feast of Tabernacles; Figures 4.4 and 4.5). These are obvious symbols for the synagogue and of the festivals that would have been celebrated there. And yet, did they have a wider significance? The presence of the menorah and ritual items from tabernacles in non-synagogue art, such as in the catacombs in Rome and the funerary art of Beth Shearim (third to fourth centuries) may imply that they became more than simply symbols of Judaism. A Syrian inscription from the end of the fourth century indicates that the synagogue could even be called *naos* 'Temple' (Horbury 1991: 42). Even the symbols of the Festivals that they would have been celebrating may have been there to remind them of the greater grandeur of the celebration in the Temple that they had now lost. Such reminders are found indeed in the fifth-century liturgy for

Figure 4.5 Three *menoroth*, with *lulav* and *ethrog* beneath, on a synagogue column from Corinth. Photo G. I. Davies

the Day of Atonement (of Yose ben Yose; see Horbury 1981: 150, 166–72). In rabbinic tradition, the setting of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac was located on the Temple mount (e.g. Sifre Deut. 28; Genesis Rabbah 55:7), the place of redemption, and hence this motif may also be consistent with the aspirations of Jews of the time.

Liturgy

Increasing caution has grown over deriving Christian liturgical practices from Jewish, and this has been strengthened by doubt amongst specialists of Jewish liturgy as to how much we may reconstruct of it. The earliest Jewish prayer books, compiled to answer liturgical disputes, date only from the ninth and tenth centuries (Hoffman 1979: 5). Attempts to reconstruct early liturgical texts through analysis of variants in manuscripts and issues of dispute in rabbinic texts (e.g. Finkelstein 1925–26; Elbogen 1931) are beset with problems of method, including the assumptions that the prayers were from the start fixed literary creations and that the rabbis are debating the same texts as those preserved in the medieval period (Hoffman 1979: 4). Heinemann's approach (1977) is to analyse the forms and contents of prayers, from which he concludes with some justification that Jewish prayer, whilst sharing certain common themes and forms, varied considerably up until the Geonic period (eighth to eleventh centuries). Fleischer concluded that obligatory prayer was an innovation of Gamaliel II towards the end of the first century CE (1990: 397–441, 1991: 683–8; and in response Reif 1991: 677–81). He sees the loss of the Temple as determinative for the development of Jewish prayer. Fleischer's position does not take into account the wide distribution of Jewish communities outside Palestine, for whom the Temple would not have been their primary focus. There is also evidence for the themes and forms of later Jewish prayer from the time of the Second Temple (Falk 1998: esp. 236–51). Institutionalized prayer (cf. Luke 11:1) and forms of prayer (Luke 11:2–4; Matt. 6:9–13) are attested in Christian writings (Falk 1998: 250; Horbury 1998b: 305–6). The Christian evidence does imply that there was some borrowing from set Jewish forms (e.g. *1 Clement* 34:7; *Didache* 10), but we cannot be sure precisely what the form and wording were.

One of the most important Jewish prayers (see *m.Berakhot* 3.3, 4.1) was and still remains the *Eighteen Benedictions* (or *Amidah*), whose themes seem to date back to before the fall of the Temple (Elbogen 1931: 29; cf. Ecclus. 36:1–17 and 2 Macc. 1:27–29). Gamaliel II is said to have finalized its form (*m.Berakhot* 4:3; *b.Berakhot* 28b), but this too may be an exaggeration of his role in the liturgy. Certainly, in his time, an emphasis on national unity and hope following the destruction of the Temple would have been themes that were gladly inherited by some rabbis from the time before 70 (Horbury 1998a: 7).

The Bible and its interpretation

By the end of the Second Temple Period there was already an acknowledgement of a collection of important books in Judaism that paved the way for a canon. As early as the prologue to the Greek translation of Ecclesiasticus in the second century BCE, one could speak of 'the Law, the prophets and other writings', words prefiguring the rabbinic division of the Hebrew Bible. It is likely that Christians had respect for the Jewish 'scriptures' (1 Cor. 15:3–4), as much as Jews had. R. Aqiba is said to have called the Song of Songs 'The holy of holies' (*m.Yadayim* 3.5), indicating deep respect for even those writings that do not fall under the categories of 'Law' or 'Prophets'.

The Septuagint translation of the Pentateuch itself can be said to be one of the earliest extant Jewish biblical interpretations, reflecting methods of exegesis employed by the Palestinian rabbinic schools. Josephus in his *Jewish Antiquities* (*Liber Antiquitatum)*, a reworking of biblical history, displays similar methods. The translation into Greek of the Bible provided a text in a common language for exegesis and disputation for both Jews and Christians. Hengel has shown how the Septuagint was used as much by Jews as Christians in Rome (1994: 182–284), and Horbury has

extended this argument to cover the rest of the Mediterranean, indicating that it should not be seen purely as a Christian text (1998a: 29–33; cf. Veltri 1994). But equally important was the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic, the targum, which provided an extensive interpretation of the biblical text in a language shared by many Jews and Christians, most notably in the east. Stemberger has emphasized the disproportion of Jewish to Christian biblical interpretations and the differences between the different texts used (1996b: 569–86). His interest, however, is on rabbinic commentaries. But when one considers the Aramaic targum on, for example, the prophets, we find there a wealth of comments in proportion to Christian commentaries on these books, even if there is a lack of Jewish *midrashim* on them (Horbury 1998a: 26–7).

Christian scholars were sometimes reliant on Jewish evidence for the biblical text, since they were for the most part unable to read the Hebrew original, and they had to take into account Jewish revisions of the Septuagint, including that attributed to Aquila. Two Christian scholars who were able to stand out by their own knowledge of the biblical text, but who were at the same time greatly indebted to Jewish interpretation, were Origen (see De Lange 1976) and Jerome (see Chapter 56 of this volume). Although it has been proposed that Jerome's approach to the biblical text was original in its use of Greek and Latin philology (Kamesar 1993: 76–81, 174–5, 189–94), Jerome himself expresses his originality ('*opus novum*') probably because of his use of Jewish interpretative traditions (Hayward 1995: 7–14). He seems to have had a good knowledge of Hebrew, which he used to criticize the Septuagint text in his *Hebrew Questions*, and, despite being an innovator, he claimed that he had many Christian predecessors in his adoption of Hebrew tradition (*Apology against Rufinus* 1.13, 2.34). It appears that he was in particular reliant on targumic tradition, suggesting that his main source was either a person whose duties involved translation for the synagogue or an actual written text (Hayward 1987, 1990: 71). Nonetheless, Jerome's motivation was theological, and he felt a Christian was a better translator of the Hebrew text than the original Septuagint translators for whom the fulfilment of the prophecies had not yet become a reality (Kamin 1991: 248–51).

Contact and controversy

It has come to be recognized that there was close contact between the early Christian and Jewish communities. No longer can we hold with Harnack (1883: 63) that anti-Jewish polemic in Christian writings was a literary genre rather than the result of real encounter, or with Freimann (1911: 561) that the Jews referred to are Hellenized Jews who know nothing of Pharisaic interpretation (see Krauss 1996: 28–9). Separation may have been gradual and never fully realized (Becker and Reed 2003), and only achieved through Christian self-demarcation from Judaism (Boyarin 2004). The image of the Jew in Christian writings is varied, ranging from stereotypic to a more genuine perception, forming a part of Christian self-perception as well as informing on the contemporary Jewish situation (Lieu 1996). In Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, from a time (*c.* 155) when there were still many Jews in the Christian body (*Dialogue with Trypho* 47.3), there appears a genuine Jewish propaganda against Christians and a knowledge of Jewish and Christian messianism (Lieu 1996: 101–50; Horbury 1998a: 25). The sermons of Chrysostom against judaizers in Antioch indicate that even under Constantine the close contact continued. The Jewish criticism of Jesus as a deceiver and magician (cf. Origen *Against Celsus* 1.28, 32; *b.Sanhedrin* 43a) was used as a tool in the disputations. Whilst there was evidently close cooperation between individual Jews and Christians, apparent in the shared biblical interpretations, in the literature they present each other as hostile groups.

Hostility towards Christianity was matched by treatment of the Samaritans (cf. *Targum Ps.-Jonathan* on Genesis 35), an opposition that would have been exacerbated by the Samaritan religious revival in the fourth century (MacDonald 1964: 36–40). One aspect of their polemic is found in the *Eighteen Benedictions*, where the twelfth benediction contains a curse on heretics (*minim*). This has been shown to be intimately connected with the theme of redemption in the prayer and the desire for a unified, pure nation (Horbury 1998a: 8). It is disputed when this denunciation of heretics was actually

applied to Christians (the medieval Palestinian, but not the Babylonian, manuscripts actually name the '*notzerim*'), opinions ranging over centuries, but the mood and content is fitting for Judaism as early as the first century. Horbury indicates that by the time of Justin Martyr in the second century, Christians were probably envisaged (1998b: 306). Certainly, a spirit of exclusivism and opposition to heretics or sinners was a part of Judaism from the time of the rise of Christianity, and with messianic hopes and longing for redemption it was natural for Christianity to adopt a similar ethos.

Julian and the Jerusalem Temple

With the Christianization of the Roman empire under Constantine, life for Jews was to change, if at first gradually. In September 324, Constantine's defeat of Licinius, emperor of the east, placed him as ruler of Palestine. This allowed him to reinforce existing measures, which, although being little more than had existed previously, may have caused some discontent amongst Jews since the practice of them had probably lapsed (Avi-Yonah 1976: 162–74). Constantine, however, was a diplomat and his opposition to Judaism expressed in his letters to church authorities did not manifest too strongly in his treatment of Jews. His successor, Constantius (337–61) was not so wise, passing laws (*Codex Theodosianus* 16 8:1, 6; 9:2) which, although apparently consistent with Roman practice, may actually have caused financial hardship to Jews and loss of trade. From the revolt of Bar Kochba in 135 to the year 351, there had been no Jewish revolts, but in 351, perhaps as a consequence of these laws, an attempt seems to have been made to restore the kingdom under one Patricius (recorded by the historian Sextus Aurelius Victor, *Liber de Caesaribus* 42.9–12). Constantius was busy with a revolt in Gaul at the time, and the governor of the east, Gallus Caesar, was an incompetent ruler. Support from Persia for the Jews may also have incited matters further. Little is known of the details of the revolt, except that it was concentrated in Galilee and the coastal plain (perhaps the areas of manufacturing industries), but the attempt was short-lived, and significantly the patriarch and authorities remained loyal to Rome.

One consequence of the revolt against Gallus may have been an acknowledgement of the need to appease the Jews in some quarters. This appeasement nearly came from the unlikely source of the emperor Julian (361–3), the Hellene trained in neo-Platonism at Athens. Ammianus Marcellinus (*History* 23.1, 2) records that Julian, as he was preparing a campaign against Persia, planned the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple, but that this venture was halted by miraculous balls of fire bursting from the foundations, an incident that appears from other sources (e.g. Rufinus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 10.39–40) to have been an earthquake (for the sources, see Levenson 1990: 261–79). Although rabbinic sources are surprisingly silent on this matter, it need not be doubted. The support of the Jews of Palestine would have been important for Julian's campaign against Persia, especially if some Jews were pro-Persian. It would have also been consistent with his Hellenic beliefs that each religion should be able to offer its own sacrifices, and Hellenic pagans seem to have assisted in the undertaking even though some had suffered in the revolt against Gallus. This was the beginning of friendly relations between Jews and pagans that persisted for some time (Avi-Yonah 1976: 198). It should, however, also be seen in the context of Julian's opposition to Christianity, since the destruction of the Temple had been taken for centuries as a sign of the truth of Christianity (Avi-Yonah 1976: 192–3). Julian reacted against the Christian stance of his predecessors by promoting the very religion that could 'disprove' the truth of the gospel. The political strength that the Temple would have given to the Palestinian Jews against the Christian bishops may also have been a factor and accounts for the rise in the status of the patriach at this time.

The end of the patriarchate

It may have been Julian who bestowed on the ethnarch/patriarch the lofty honorary title of *praefectus praetorio*, an acknowledgement of his status in conjunction with other grand titles that accrued to the

office in this period (*Codex Theodosianus* 16 8:8, 11, 13, 15). Certainly, there appears to have been a rise in the status of the ethnarch in the fourth century. Levine suggests that it should be seen in the context of the rise in the power of bishops at this time, and a consequent desire on the part of the emperor to counter ecclesiastical authorities (1996: 32). This would be in accord with the motives for Julian's attempt to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple. Whatever the reason for the increase in status, the honorary title was cancelled in 415 by emperor Theodosius II, and in 429 a law speaks of the 'ending of the patriarchate' (*Codex Theodosianus* 16 8:22, 29). We do not know the reasons why the patriarchate ceased. Perhaps Theodosius refused to recognize a successor to the last patriarch and the office simply died out rather than actually being abrogated. One suggestion is that it was abolished as a result of a Jewish revolt in 418 (see Levine 1996: 32, n. 161). In the eastern Diaspora, the exilarchate was probably also abolished sometime after this and until the Arab conquerors took over the region in the seventh century, the Jews lived in difficult times. But the heritage of the first five centuries ensured a strong cultural and intellectual life for their descendants, and paved the way for great works such as the Talmud, leaving a resilient religious tradition to survive the demands of the changing political and religious environment that was ahead.

Notes

1 I will continue to use the expressions 'Jew', 'Jewish' and 'Judaism' in this essay, since I am unconvinced by the arguments in favour of their replacement by 'Judean' and 'Judeanism'. For the debates, see Schwartz 2011.
2 McGing (2002) shows how tendentious most calculations of population are.
3 There is also a lack of Jewish Latin writings, rendering the study of Jewish–Christian relations in Western Christianity more difficult. In a similar way to the argument here for the existence of Jewish Greek writers, Rutgers (1995: 210–59) argues for an active Jewish Latin community in Rome.

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PART II

Christian origins and development

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5

THE GALILEAN WORLD OF JESUS

In memoriam Seán Freyne[1]

Douglas E. Oakman

> Interpretation in [history and archaeology] . . . necessitates a degree of guided conjecture, but, to quote Max Weber, 'an ingenious error is more fruitful for science than stupid accuracy.'
>
> *(Shimon Applebaum)*

For such a small region of the globe, Galilee has surely had scholarly and world impact out of all proportion to its size. Over the last few decades, understanding of the social world and imperial realities of Roman Galilee has become ever more important for narratives about the emergence of early Christianity and Judaism. Since the magisterial synthesis of Professor Freyne in the first edition of this work (in 2000), both social theory (or its lack) and archaeological information, as well as studies of the Roman social world, have played ever more prominent roles in historical interpretation. Freyne expressed concern that then-current historical Jesus research was too theologically motivated. Certainly, recent scholarship has raised and struggled with a variety of new questions related to the Galilean world of Jesus. These questions arise, not only from theology, but also from various ideological commitments, social preconceptions, and interpretive assumptions.

This chapter situates Jesus of Nazareth especially within the pre-70 CE realities of Roman Galilee. Of course, this setting also holds importance for the emergence of rabbinic Judaism in the late first century. Yet both Christianity and rabbinic Judaism took on more distinctive shapes in the post-70 CE period after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, and especially in the second century CE with rabbi and synagogue on the one hand and bishop and church on the other. Jesus lived under the overlays of Roman imperial, Herodian, and Judean political cultures, and his historical activity held profound political ramifications.

The ecological setting of Hellenistic-Roman Galilee

Both Josephus and the Mishnah subdivide Galilee into Lower Galilee, Upper Galilee, and the valley of Tiberias (*JW* 3.35–40; m. Sheb. 9:2; Strange 2014). Presumably, these sources also include the Galilean Lake. Good general accounts of the physical characteristics of Galilee are available (Goodman 1983: 17–40; Aviam 2013). Most of Galilee is made up of sedimentary limestone (hard and soft), though volcanic basalt dominates the eastern areas near the Galilean Lake and Huleh Valley. Buildings in Lower

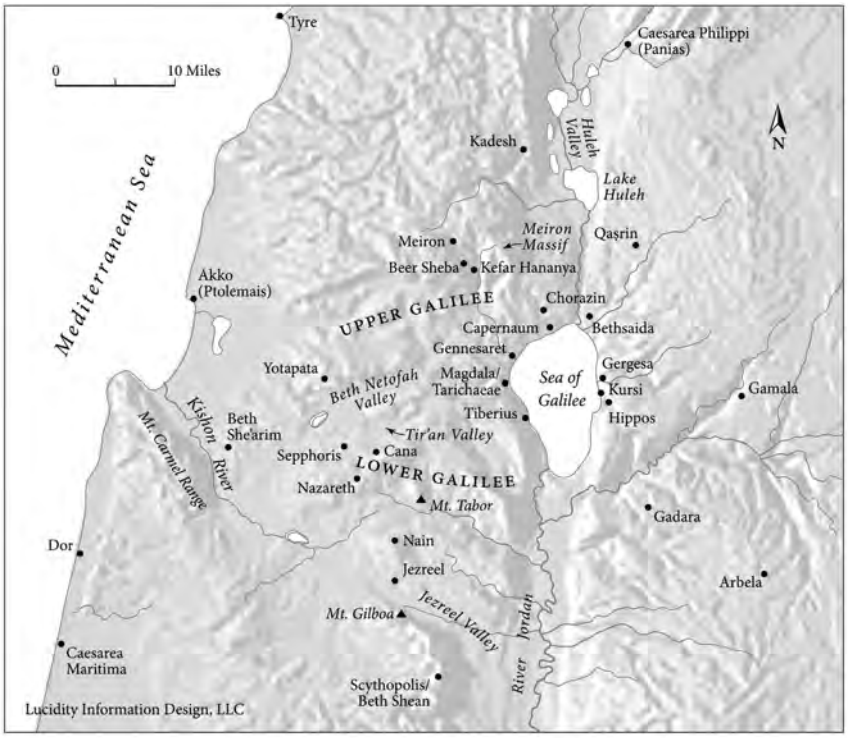

Figure 5.1 Map of Galilee in the time of Jesus. Photo in Hanson and Oakman 2008: x, with permission of Fortress Press

and Upper Galilee are primarily made of limestone; on the north end of the lake, buildings, stone presses, and grinding stones are made of basalt. Lower Galilee is crosscut by fertile east-west valleys and low mountains (Mt. Kamon peaks at 598 meters above sea level); Upper Galilee reaches about 1,200 meters at Mt. Meiron (Ronen *et al*. 1993: 449). The lake is on average about 210 meters below sea level, covering an area of about 21 by 13 kilometers. The geology of the lake region is subject to the plate tectonics that have also created the Jordan River Valley (see Shroder and Inbar 1995: 1:65–98).

The total area of Galilee is estimated at about 2,073 square kilometers, of which 65 to 70 percent was cultivated at the turn of the eras (Applebaum 1976: 646; Strange 2014: 265). The natural vegetation is Mediterranean woodland (including especially evergreen thickets and oaks). Lower Galilee receives on average 600 millimeters of rain, while Upper Galilee receives 800 millimeters, quite adequate for all kinds of agriculture, viticulture, and arboriculture. Soils and rainfall encouraged grain in the valleys, and vines and olive trees on the rugged hill- and mountainsides. Deuteronomy 8:8 already names the fundamental products of the land: 'a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey.' Many types of other crops were possible, including pulses and fruit trees. The lake offered rich fare in edible fish. Indeed, the two prominent staples in the Galilee of Jesus were bread and fish (Mark 6:38). In the poorly drained eastern Beit Netofa and Huleh Valleys, flax could be cultivated. But equally, malaria was a problem in those areas (Reed 2014).

Settlements generally were sited on the hills to provide maximum agricultural land and to rise above the mosquitoes carrying malaria. If natural springs were not nearby, watertight plastered cisterns were necessary. Josephus remarks that the Galilee of his day was fully under cultivation (*JW* 3.42–43) and populous with 204 settlements (*Life* 235). For Galilee, considering the agricultural carrying capacity, the population was at maximum around 175,000. Further considerations of agricultural production and population will be pursued below.

Figure 5.2 A contemporary fisherman landing his catch at Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee. Photo Philip F. Esler

Galilean social systems and conflicting interests

The understanding of the context of Jesus of Nazareth has been enormously enriched in the past forty years by interdisciplinary engagement with comparative social sciences. This engagement has made ever more clear that historical interpretation is hazardous; but interpretation in historical narrative is unavoidable. If interpretation can be characterized as 'reading between the lines,' or 'connecting the dots,' then the fact that much of the past is lost to us will indicate the absolute centrality of interpretation in historical work. Moreover, preconceptions of the interpreter must be critically examined in order to avoid the twin dangers of anachronism and ethnocentrism. John Rogerson puts the matter this way:

> [w]hile we do not invent the past, our narrative accounts of it are affected and shaped by factors such as our very limited knowledge of what happened in the past, and our situatednesses in nation, gender, class, political and religious commitment or lack of the same, and aims and interests in wanting to construct narratives about the past, in the first place.
>
> *(2009: 18)*

The current state of Galilee research stands in much flux precisely because of competing interpretations, problematic anachronisms, and ethnocentrisms. Over the almost twenty years since the original article of Seán Freyne for this volume, work on the social world of Galilee and the involvement of archaeological data have required the rethinking of almost all the old verities. Gone is the sunny, innocent Galilee of Ernest Renan. Galilee, the hotbed of revolutionaries, has now become a hotbed of reinterpretation. Galilee is no longer 'the circle of the nations,' but in the minds of some a monochrome 'Jewish region.' Culture is given uncritical precedence over politics, and anachronistic economic ideas befuddle the question.

The New Testament gospels and Josephus all post-date 70 CE. So too do the rabbinic sources. While all have memories and recollections of the pre-70 situation, the danger of anachronism looms very large. For instance, the dictum of Julius Wellhausen over a century ago is well known: 'Jesus was not a Christian, he was a Jew' (1905). Today, the notion of Judaism as a first-century

'free-standing religion' is under intensive scrutiny. The nomenclature 'Jew' or 'Judean' has spawned numerous scholarly arguments and explicit appeals to social identity theory (Cromhout 2007, 2008; Mason 2007; Berlin 2014: 211; Esler 2015).

Furthermore, archaeology has played an increasingly important role in interpreting the Galilean world of Jesus as well as Jesus in context (Reed 2000; Crossan and Reed 2001; Fiensy 2007; Oakman 2012). Important archaeologists working in Galilee have eschewed the use of comparative social sciences, such as appeals to Gerhard Lenski's *Power and Privilege* (1984; but see Magness 2011: 13–15). A prominent development over the last decade, however, is the claim that Galilee at the turn of the eras enjoyed prosperity for all, under moderate Herodian rule, with insignificant social stratification, and such that social problems and dislocations can hardly be invoked to explain the appearances of John the Baptist in Peraea or Jesus of Nazareth in Galilee (Jensen 2006; Mattila 2010, 2013; Aviam 2013).

How to locate Jesus in Galilee, then, has been a matter of strenuous debate. Was Jesus a 'Peasant Jewish Cynic' (Crossan 1991), 'Jewish Galilean' (Freyne 2004), or simply a Galilean (Fiensy 2007)? Was he Torah observant or not? What were his views of Judean eschatology or the Jerusalem Temple? Did he think of himself as a messiah? Was he literate or illiterate? Was he wealthy or poor? Was he a 'middler' or a vagabond? These are the kinds of questions being given a complex variety of answers. In the midst of this flux, then, it is impossible to avoid the hazard of interpretation. The quest of the historical Jesus, as Freyne held, has indeed become also the quest of the historical Galilee; but prospects for a consensus seem more remote than at the time of the first edition of this chapter.

Power and culture

All of these scholarly conversations involve assumptions about how power and culture were related in the early Roman empire and in Roman Galilee. Perhaps one of the most persistent disagreements in the study of the social world of the Roman Empire, including Roman Galilee, has been over the use of comparative social science and macro-social models. Historians and archaeologists tend to like detailed narratives based upon inductive inferences, and there has been the frequent accusation that comparative social models supply missing data inappropriately (Fiensy and Hawkins 2013; Oakman 2013, 2014a; Fiensy 2014: 81–84; Freyne 2014: 6, 91–93). However, even archaeologists and social historians have to supply missing data since the data of antiquity is always incomplete.

In recent archaeological approaches to Galilee, for example, cultural interpretations have prevailed. However, these approaches have to a high degree ignored the question of the relationship between power and culture. It is important, therefore, to make an a priori decision about whether power precedes culture, that is, culture is embedded within power, or vice versa, that is, power is embedded within culture. Of course, religion has been a central feature of human cultures, so the question of priority also pertains to the relationship between religion and politics.

In the Mediterranean world of Rome, Galilee, and Jesus, extended families (natural and fictive) provided the central institutional structures. Caesar could view the empire as an extended household (Phil 4:22). This implies that 'power' in the world of Jesus had to do with how elite families controlled and treated everyone else. This understanding can be modeled as in Figure 5.3.

This diagram suggests that the culture of the leading family becomes the dominant culture. Power determines Culture. This does not preclude subcultures of other families from functioning within or contesting the culture of the ruling elite. No social power is absolute, and non-elites had various forms of power for negotiating life from below. From a different point of view, if religion provides meaning to the cultural world, then political religion is the religion of the ruling elite, which legitimates the way things are. Further, religious politics of the non-elites may contest the way things are in the name of a higher power. In this respect, Culture determines Power. While the ways of the elites tend to be imprinted in the grand traditions of the dominant culture, the little traditions of families and regions tend to bolster counter-cultures and contest the dominant power. These considerations will become important in the case of Jesus of Nazareth when it is perceived that for his

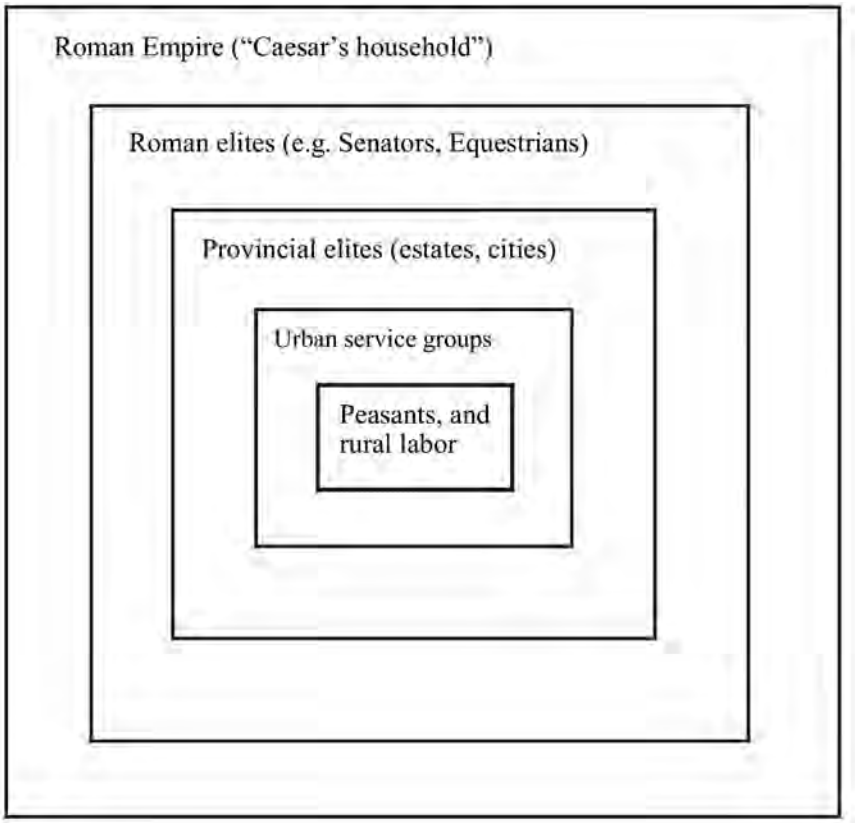

Figure 5.3 Power in the early Roman empire. Diagram by Douglas E. Oakman

in-group God is Father (the absolute householder and patron), but for Jesus' worldly action in early Roman Galilee, his guiding idea was that God is King.

Power (and consequent privilege) must be the more-or-less 'independent variable' in the interpretive proposals of this chapter. Non-elite families, local cultures, economic realities, and religion all are embedded in the fields of force exerted by the ruling families. In the Galilean world of Jesus, power relations were by and large vertical in structure. Not surprisingly, then, the literature of patronage has become more prevalent in recent work on the gospels (Elliott 1996; Malina 2001a: 31–35, 2001b: 94–96). The politics in the Galilee of Jesus was patronal, and the dependency relations thus spawned affected all aspects of society. This is especially important when considering the politics and political economy of Roman Galilee.

Provincial elites: Judeans and Herods in Galilee

The political history of Galilee has been unfolded in numerous scholarly places. The literary sources are clear that Palestine was a political bone of contention between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, which terminated in favor of the latter by the definitive conquests of Antiochus III (Panion 200 BCE; Jerusalem 198 BCE; Tcherikover 1937). Subsequently in 167 BCE, the policies of Antiochus Epiphanes provoked the uprising of Mattathias and his sons. The wars of the Maccabeans included the campaigns of Simon and Jonathan to the north and the annexation of Galilee (1 Macc 5:15–23, 10:30, 11:63). Ideologically, Hasmonean aspirations may have aimed at establishing the borders of Ezekiel's ideal Israel (Cromhout 2008: 12–87). Recent archaeology correlates the disappearance of Hellenistic period

Galilean Coarse Ware storage jars with this expansion (Aviam 2004: 44–50, 2013: 6). Yodefat likely originated as a Persian or Ptolemaic fort and was taken by the Hasmoneans along with other such forts; it later became an administrative town for Lower Galilee and was destroyed in 67 CE at the beginning of the Judean-Roman War of 66–70 CE.

It has been debated as to how populous Galilee was before the Hasmonean takeover, and whether Israelites of the northern kingdom survived down to the times of the Hasmoneans. Richard Horsley has argued vigorously that descendants of Israelite peasants remained in Galilee throughout the Persian and Hellenistic periods and preserved northern Israelite traditions in Galilee (Horsley 1995, 1996), but Reed and Cromhout speak against this (Reed 2000; Cromhout 2008). Archaeological surveys suggest that Galilee was sparsely populated during the Persian and early Hellenistic periods (Reed 2000: 23–61, based on Gal's survey). Yet this makes it difficult to understand how Judeans got there to be liberated by the Maccabees. It also would imply that agricultural land, which was considered highly valuable by the Hellenistic monarchs preceding the Hasmoneans, would have been mostly abandoned. Archaeologists like Mordechai Aviam can document the power of Akko/Ptolemais before the Hasmonean conquests. Fortresses guard the agricultural territory (Aviam 2004: 29). If royal estates of the Seleucids, inherited from the Ptolemies, endured up until Hasmonean times, then there had to be peasants working the best land. After 100 BCE, Hasmonean policy in Galilee encouraged settlement by Judeans.[2]

First Maccabees 12:1–3 also recounts that the Hasmoneans made a treaty with the Romans. Their appearance in the east would have enormous consequences for Palestine in the first century BCE with the conquests of Pompey, the demise of Hasmonean rule, the reorganization of taxation districts by Gabinius (Jos. *JW* 1.170), the favors of Julius Caesar and Mark Antony during the Republican civil wars, and eventually the rise of the house of Herod. Herod consolidated his power by killing prominent Hasmoneans and expropriating their estates. He also expropriated estate lands of the Sadducean (wealthy) faction of Jerusalem priests. Applebaum (1989: 245) gives a comprehensive survey of estate lands under the control of the Herods: Sadducean estates in Samaria; domains of Berenice on the Esdraelon Plain, in southwestern Samaria, and in the Golan; Antipas in the eastern Hepher Plain and in northwestern Samaria; Yavneh belonging to Salome; Herod the Great's estate lands in eastern Perea, estates on the Jericho Plain; Herodian interests in Bashan and Hauran. Temple and priestly lands were probably under the purview of Sepphoris (Fiensy 2014: 98–117). After 70 CE, many of these estates came under the control of the imperial authorities.

Herod the Great at the beginning of his rule as King of the Judeans subdued banditry in Galilee, suggestive of very unsettled agrarian conditions up to that time. At Herod's death, Hezekiah led

Figure 5.4 A view of the Beit Netofa valley from Sepphoris. Photo Douglas E. Oakman

an armed insurrection that had to be put down by a Roman legion under Varus. Strong-man rule continued in Galilee under Herod's son, Antipas. He ably controlled things through his patronage networks (Mark 6:21). Powerful, wealthy Judeans also had significant interests in Galilee during Jesus' lifetime. Sepphoris was a Judean-oriented city, which may suggest why Herod Antipas wanted to found Tiberias as a more Hellenized capital. (The Hebrew University excavations have definitely dated the theater found in Sepphoris to post-70 CE (Fiensy and Strange 2015: 67).) Mark indicates that Jesus' most important Galilean opponents were the clients of these powerful interests, namely, the Herodians (Herod partisans and clients) and the Pharisees (3:6).

Galilee's agrarian political economy

Political history alone is inadequate to understand the context of Jesus. Political histories based on ancient literary sources, or archaeology focused solely on cultural artifacts, have tended merely to follow the perspectives and interests of the elite factions at the top of the social ladder. Further theoretical nuance can be gained by taking seriously the general character of 'agrarian civilizations.' The models of Lenski (1984), Kautsky (1982), and Sjøberg (1960) have been deployed in previous work to understand the context of Jesus. To them now can be added the perspectives of world systems and Big History (Christian 2004). In the words of David Christian, drawing upon ecological metaphors:

> [a]grarian civilizations [are] large societies based on agriculture, with states and all that that implies (literacy, warfare, etc.) . . . Human society became the 'niche' in which elites foraged for the resources they needed. Society became multilayered, with a base level of those who exploited nature (the primary producers) and upper layers of those who exploited those who exploited nature.
>
> *(2004: 248–249)*

Homomorphic macro-models become necessary to highlight important general features of the agrarian social world. These abstract models have to be selective in order to be informative. Though they do not satisfy the social historian's desire for detailed isomorphic micro-models, they can help to correct anachronistic assumptions about social processes and cultural details (Carney 1975; Finley 1986; Rohrbaugh 1987; Elliott 1993; Morley 2004).

For the greatest clarity about the agrarian social situation of Galilee, it is necessary to model Jesus' world from the bottom up. Figure 5.5 gives a sense of how this all works at least for agriculture (leaving out of consideration for now the fishing industry of the Galilean Lake).

Elite power and politics frustrate the small farmer ideal of self-sufficiency and subsistence agriculture along with the possibility of consuming 100 percent of the harvest. This is the clear meaning of the term 'peasant'—someone not living according to the self-sufficiency ideal, but rather subject to vertical power relations that frustrate that ideal. After all, elite rents and taxes extract so-called surpluses. *So the emphasis must be on 'so-called.'* Dependency relations and patronage politics were the Galilean rule and norm. The idea of a 'free peasant' or 'freeholder' seems hard to sustain if this is the case (on tenancy, see Kloppenborg 2008). All pre-industrial agriculture after the appearance of cities and states was accomplished by some form of dependent labor.

And under the early empire, the elites themselves seek resources to repay their own provincial and imperial patrons, and the elites themselves hold to the ideal of their own self-sufficiency—which entails the control over the productive resources of land and other people's labor. This entails Mammon, that is, money in the treasure house, on loan, or on deposit; and the building of storehouses (Luke 12:18). Elites have the power to modify productive decisions away from subsistence farming and toward cash crops and commerce. These decisions impact the subsistence margins of the dependent labor that works the land. Bad years and poor productive decisions can yield a crop of landless peasants and a harvest of banditry.

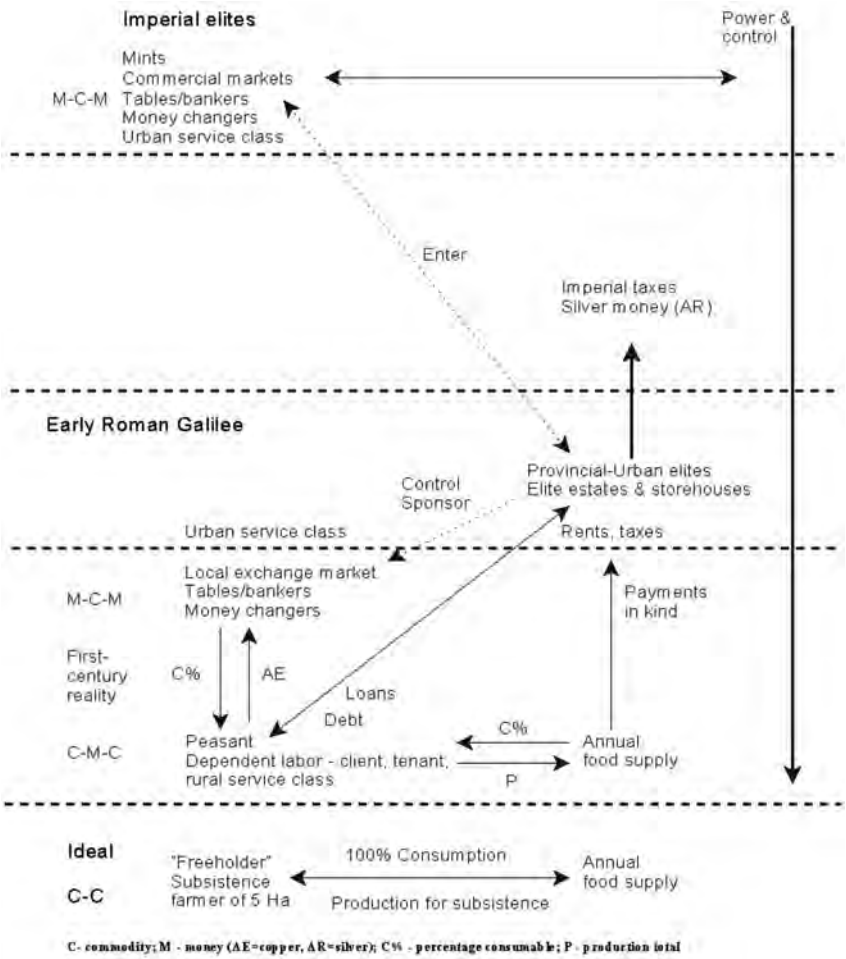

Figure 5.5 A model for early Roman Galilee. Devised by Douglas E. Oakman

Debates continue on the level of rents and taxes in early Roman Galilee (Udoh 2014). Keith Hopkins (2002) has argued that the Roman authorities allowed a sizeable 'take' to the provincial elites, precisely to buy their allegiance, but also with the expectation of costly demonstrations of loyalty. The Herods obliged with extravagance. Josephus notes the hatred for Herod the Great for despoiling the country, but also hatred for Agrippa I for largesse to Berytos (*Ant.* 17.306; 20.211–212). Ehud Netzer, of course, discovered Herod's tomb a few years ago, with his sarcophagus broken into hundreds of small pieces by the insurgents who held the Herodion during the 66–70 revolt.

Broshi notes the importance of the Babatha archivea for assessing the question of the typical extraction level. Babatha paid half the dates per tree in her contracts, and 1 Maccabees 10:30 suggests that this level may have been a standard for rents and taxes on tree crops throughout the Hellenistic-Roman period (Broshi 1992: 236). First Maccabees also mentions one-third of the grain per annum. The rents implied in the Luke 16 story of the 'Dishonest Steward' are sizeable. They were also burdensome, for why else would falsifying the books be acclaimed in the villages? And patronage politics, the return obligation and loyalties incurred by the villagers, are clearly in view.

As for any taxes imposed in money, what would the villager have left from so-called surpluses on the threshing floor to sell for cash? Gildas Hamel calls attention to the following interesting passage in the Tosephta:

> The renter of a field harvests, makes sheaves, [threshes], and winnows. [Then] the measurers, diggers, bailiff, and steward come and take from the middle (before the product is shared by the landowner and sharecropper). The well-master, bather, barber, boatsman, when they come [to collect] by the owner's authority, they take from his share; if they come [to collect] by the sharecropper's authority, they take from his share. The customs of the region are not to be changed . . . (tBM 9.14; pBM 9.1.12a adds the salaries of town watchmen).
>
> *(1990: 154)*

It is absolutely essential to realize that rents and various kinds of local taxes always had to be paid to a significant extent in produce. The reason for this is that these so-called surpluses line the larders of the landlords and urban elites. Correspondingly, the 'stores' of the village and the peasant household shrink, and beyond harvest time, subsistence anxiety must have been a persistent reality. Peter Brown has called storehouses the 'economic villains of the ancient world' (2012: 14).

Literary sources and archaeological finds do offer some information about elite storehouses in Roman Palestine (cf. Borowski 1987: 82). An early midrash reports that Nakdimon ben Gorion, Ben Kalba Sabbua, and Ben Zizit Hakeset 'could provision Jerusalem for ten years' (Midrash Lament. Rabba 1; Applebaum 1976: 659); b. Gittin 56a confirms that these three were remembered as fabulously wealthy. The *horreum* at the Northern Palace of Herod the Great is a prominent sign of the costs of the royal house to the agricultural producers. Josephus refers to an imperial granary in Upper Galilee (*Life* 71) and to wheat of Queen Berenike stored at Besara (*Life* 119). Acts 12:20 reports that Agrippa I supplied Tyre and Sidon with food. It has been reported that there were large granaries at Sepphoris, and most likely at Tiberias as well. Mendel Nun calls attention to the talmudic phrase 'from Susita to Tiberias' as indicating the regular conveyance of grain by boat to the Galilean city.

Moreover, the Herods and the chief priests under the Romans developed commerce far beyond the level achieved in the Hasmonean kingdom. Herod built the emporium Caesarea Maritima, and had commercial interests also with the Nabateans (Dar 2007: 306). The megalithic building programs of Herod the Great, Antipas, and Philip, especially seen in building and expansion of cities, would place much strain upon the country dwellers. The temple required enormous resources from Palestine, and Galilean wheat and oil supplied the on-going temple rituals (Hanson and Oakman 2008: 127–145). The wealthy high priests were involved in various kinds of business ventures—both private and temple-related. Eleazar ben Zadok and Abba Saul ben Batnith controlled wheat flour, wine, and oil interests. Eleazar was also involved in the sale of Ennion glassware to pilgrims

Figure 5.6 Herod's storehouse at Masada. Photo Douglas E. Oakman

(Engle 1977; Oakman 2012: 105). Tyrian silver money held sway in Jerusalem and Galilee; Antipas was only allowed to mint copper coins. Mediterranean sea-borne commerce made possible accumulation of luxury goods, but also for cities on the coast trade in bulk goods (esp. wine and oil, but also grain). Overland transport was difficult and expensive, but clearly possible for powerful wealthy families.

What about the food supplies and food security of the villager? Based upon studies of Serbian peasant economics in the 1950s, Joel Halpern determined that the north Mediterranean peasant (with some degree of modern technologies) could reach self-sufficiency on five hectares of land (1967: 74–75). Anything less than this area would require supplemental wage income—but this would imply that additional food surpluses were available to be purchased. And if landlords and urban elites were to extract exorbitant taxes and rents from the produce, then what would be left to the smallholder to be sold for money in the market? Low-paid labor done for others would have to compensate. Estimates of plot sizes in ancient Palestine are in accord with this comparative instance. Ben-David 'supposes an area of 7 hectares for a family of six to nine people' (cited in Hamel 1990: 134). Eusebius relates in *The Ecclesiastical History* (3.20.1–2) that relatives of Jesus shared a 2.5 Ha plot between two families. This also seems to be a standard plot size from Dar's survey of Samaria (Dar 1986; see also m. Baba Bathra 1:6; DJD II, p. 145, cited in Applebaum 1976: 657).

There are further systemic issues to be reckoned with. As inheritance customs require plot-divisions into smaller and smaller parcels, the five self-sufficient minimum is no longer possible. Animal fodder, seed requirements, the necessity for fallow periods—all press against subsistence. With no refrigeration, food preservation and storage is a significant issue. Low to zero inter-annual storage rates for most peasants are the rule. Belt-tightening is the ordinary (but, see Wilson 2014: 81–132).

Population pressure and land scarcity add additional danger. The available arable land in ancient Galilee has been variously estimated. The best recent estimate is 2,073 square kilometers (Strange 2014: 265). Abstractly, say 145,110 cultivable hectares (70 percent of 207,300 Ha) are available in the Galilee of Herod Antipas (cf. Applebaum 1976: 646, based upon Reifenberg). This amounts to 29,022 subsistence plots of 5 Ha each. If family sizes on average were five to six, then the Galilean population correspondingly would maximally amount to around 175,000 people at any one time. Viewed from a different angle, the 145,110 Ha, assuming 30 percent fallowing and fields entirely sown to grain at 150 kg per Ha, and a yield of 1:5, would produce 76,183 metric tons. One-fifth of this would need to be set aside for the next seeding. Two hundred kilograms per annum is a starvation ration. Assuming 250 kg for a working peasant, an absolute subsistence population would be around 244,000 (Broshi 1980: 7; Hamel 1990: 138). And when all agrarian production decisions are made by the elites who own (control) the land, subsistence crops compete with cash cropping!

The feedback model (Figure 5.7) can illustrate the factors endangering and perhaps strategies embraced by villagers to protect peasant subsistence.

Given very small cultivable plots and perennial elite exactions, local exchange markets or fairs become a necessity, but these are controlled and staged by people with resources (MacMullen 1970; Safrai 1994: 239–269). Once a 'middle man' (whether personal, money, or market) is interposed between peasant and consumable produce, the primary producer is at a distinct disadvantage. Long-distance commerce is no help since it is solely an elite game. Peter Brown has expressed it this way:

> Farmers could bring their produce into the nearest town. But the rich had privileged access to wider and more lucrative markets. They alone could defeat distance . . . The rich alone could also defeat time. They could store the abundance of the harvest and wait to sell when the prices were at their highest.
>
> *(2012: 14)*

And in accordance with Gresham's Law, 'bad' copper (i.e., token) money in the provincial Roman bi-metallic monetary system drives out the 'good' silver money. This fact is amply attested by coin

Enemies of peasant subsistence [Factors having negative impact on village subsistence, i.e., negative feedback]	Ideal of production for 100% consumption [Factors having positive impact on village subsistence, i.e., positive feedback]
Social threats •Taxes & rents - visible diminishment of annual consumption •Elite storehouses •Absentee or "single-strand" landlords •Corvée labor - labor siphoned away from the fields •Monumental building programs - labor conscription or "wage slavery" •Money (leading to loans, debt) - what is produced has to be repurchased •Chronic debt •Markets - what is produced can be sold to the highest bidder •Translocal markets •Cash cropping, commercial interests •Partible inheritance •Banditry *Natural threats* •Land pressure, marginal plots •Population pressure •Contamination •Pestilence or blight •Drought •Soil depletion (inadequate fallow periods) •Soil salinization	*Tactical measures* •Hiding produce •Contaminating in-kind tax produce, keeping the good produce •Surreptitious cultivation *Social measures* •Patron, "multi-strand landlord" (clientship, loyalty and obligation) •Tax and debt relief •Sharecropping vs. fixed rents •Agrarian revolt? *Natural opportunities* •New or more land available •Foraging during periods of famine

Figure 5.7 Factors in food security and insecurity. Diagram by Douglas E. Oakman

hoards and the prevalence of copper coinage at archaeological sites. The Romans may have sensed the power of money to work in this way—engendering ever more debt and dependency at the agrarian bottom (Goodman 1982; Hamel 1990: 156–158). Bad money will drive out the good, and only the good can support commercial ventures. Bad money, in effect, drives the goods to the urban and provincial storehouses. The villager's room for maneuvering for viable annual subsistence becomes very small in this social world.

These systemic considerations underscore the important point that the ancient provincial elites held all the power and productive levers in early Roman Palestine. They controlled land through estates and labor through debt, client loyalty, and obligation. The significant Galilean elites at that time, of course, derived from the Herods and their clients (the Herodians) and the Jerusalem priestly elites and their clients (temple scribes and Pharisees).

Jesus in his Galilean world

It is crucial to remember that almost all of our written sources of Jesus and his Galilee date from a later time, after the catastrophe of 70 CE. While Josephus mentions Jesus of Nazareth in the famous Flavian Testimony (*Ant.* 18.63), the report has been embellished through the hands of later Christian copyists. And of course Tacitus mentions the execution of 'Christus' at the hands of the provincial governor Pilate (*Annals* 15.44). Various rabbinic traditions provide information largely about second-century Galilee (Goodman 1983; Safrai 1994).

The earliest written records to provide substantial information about Jesus stand in the reconstructed document Q and the Gospel of Mark. Parallel sayings of Jesus in the *Gospel of Thomas* may be as old as those in Q, or at least in more original forms. Not all scholars are persuaded about a written document Q; and even more debate focuses on a Q stratified into at least two editions. But the reasons for seeing a sayings source used by both Matthew and Luke are very strong, and the alternate hypotheses for explaining the relationship of the Synoptic Gospels have many problems (Kloppenborg 2000). Moreover, earliest or wisdom Q is distinctive in its use of simple *chreiai* (aphorisms) and concern for economic issues; the later or deuteronomic Q edition incorporates more elaborated *chreiai* as well as strong elements of Judean eschatology (for instance, the Danielic figure of the Son of Man, also notable in the Gospel of Mark). Earliest Q seemingly was the product of scribes in the administration of Herod Antipas (Arnal 2001); the deuteronomic recension, with its decidedly Judean color, probably took shape after the transfer of the royal archives from Tiberias to Sepphoris at the beginning of the reign of Nero (54 CE; Josephus, *Life* 38–39).[3]

It is most probable that Jesus was born in Galilee. However, the Synoptic Gospels indicate problems surrounding his paternity, so it also seems highly probable that Jesus was illegitimate (Schaberg 1987; Van Aarde 2001; Oakman 2012: 67–68). As such, his honor rating would have been low in the eyes of contemporaries, especially in the conservative ethos of the village, and this may have been one reason for his departure from Nazareth (Mark 6:1–6; Matthew 4:13). Contemporaries of Jesus familiar with Deuteronomy 23:2 may have considered him a non-Israelite. Early traditions associate him with 'tax collectors [*telōnai*] and sinners' (Q 7:34; Mark 2:16). The genealogies of Matthew and Luke, or the making explicit of Joseph's paternity in Matthew, Luke, and John, show the tendency to rescue Jesus' honor (despite the information in Q and Mark that Jesus was alienated from his family).

Jesus and the Galilean fishers

Given land scarcity, a landless peasant from Nazareth would be forced into wage labor. Jesus is called a *tektōn* in the Gospel of Mark (6:3). The meaning of this trade has been debated; it probably refers to a worker in wood or stone and a building generalist (although Justin *Dialogue with Trypho* 88 reported that Jesus made yokes and plows; Fiensy 2007: 69). It is possible that passages in Q 6:41–42 or 48; Luke 13:4, 14:28–30; or *Gos. Thom.* 77 reflect Jesus' experiences in his trade. It is probable that Jesus' travels and experiences, reflected in the parables especially, had more to do with finding work than conducting a religious mission (Fiensy 2007: 74; Oakman 2012: 83). Moreover, the parables and sayings also show knowledge of estates and markets in the cities.

Figure 5.8 Limestone door-jamb from Jotapata. Photo Douglas E. Oakman

Figure 5.9 First-century boat from the Sea of Galilee, on display in the Yigal Alon Museum in Kibbutz Ginosar. Photo from Wikicommons; *Travellers & Tinkers*, own work

In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus leaves Nazareth and takes up residence in Capernaum. When not wandering elsewhere, Jesus spent considerable time in the environs of the Galilean Lake and in the company of fishers. As a peasant artisan, he could perhaps find work in the local building trade and in boat repair (McCown 1928). The Galilee boat recovered in 1985 showed numerous patches and repairs, demonstrating the necessity of wood workers. Moreover, the boat attested the use of both oars and sails, with a capacity of up to fifteen persons (Wachsmann 2000: 315).

Archaeology has shown that development of harbors on the lake began in the Hellenistic period; a harbor was established by the Hasmoneans at Magdala (Aviam 2013: 13–14). This suggests that in the late Hellenistic period the lake was considered a royal monopoly. Herod Antipas and Philip probably held the same (competing) view on the lake's resources. Both built cities on the lake (Tiberias and Bethsaida/Julias respectively), which probably attests a desire for greater control over the fishing. Both cities also signify through their names the loyalty and obligation shown toward Rome by the Herods (Hirschfeld *et al.* 1993, 2008; Arav and Freund 1995–2009; Strickert 2011: 165–168). Nun has identified at least fourteen harbors around the lake and commented that they would have required substantial building labor (Nun 1988: 27). These might have been constructed with conscript or corvée labor.

The fishing syndicates were not exceptionally wealthy and paid their fixed 'rent' in fish to *telōnai*, that is, agents who contracted rent and tax collection from the Galilean elites. Figure 5.10 shows how control over the lake resources can be represented (Hanson 1997; Hanson and Oakman 2008: 101).

The vertical structures and flow of goods *replicate* the patronal structures and relations of the landed estates under elite control. Fish were salted in Magdala (Nun 1989: 51); some Galilean fish were processed for Mediterranean commerce (Hanson 1997; Freyne 2014: 95). As with bulk commodities or luxuries, only the powerful wealthy could (through agents) conduct circum-Mediterranean

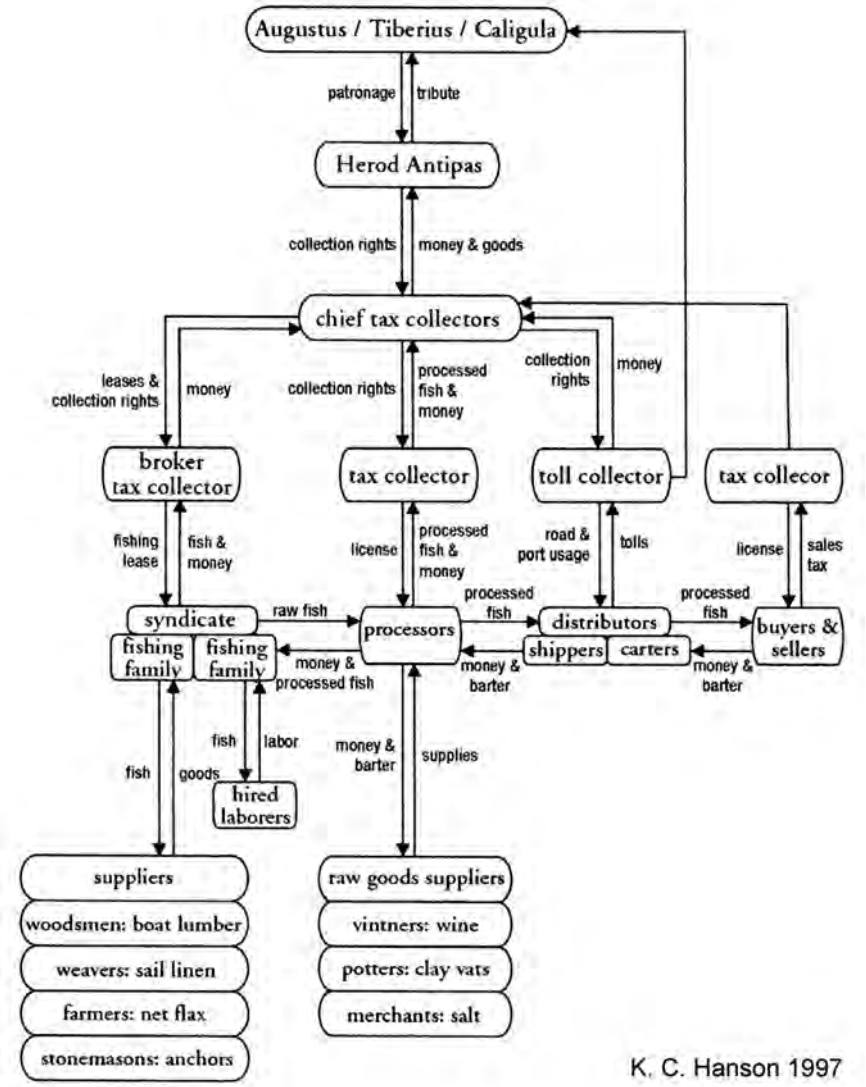

Figure 5.10 Resources associated with the Sea of Galilee and their control. Diagram by K. C. Hanson

commerce. It is clear, however, that the fishers themselves were not in a position to carry on long-distance trade. Like their agricultural relatives, the fishers lived precariously and had to buy back from their own catch!

Jesus and Judeans in Galilee

The incorporation into recent discussion of ethnic identity theory, and careful philological analysis of *Ioudaios*, has urged that the translation 'Judean' is to be preferred for the first century over 'Jew'; and that the more accurate translation of *Ioudaismos* is 'one embracing ethnic markers and customs of Judea.' The usage of the terms Jew or Judaism as exclusively religious or cultural terms in the early first century further ignores the over-determining realities of power and 'political identity' (Feldman 1999; Moxnes 2001; Cromhout 2007, 2008; Elliott 2007; Mason 2007; Berlin 2014: 211; Esler 2014, 2015).

Based on an important synthetic study of archaeological materials, Andrea Berlin has argued for a 'household Judaism' in Galilee during the early Roman period (2005, 2014: 208–215). Central to her proposal are *miqva'oth* (ritual purity baths), a common simple cooking assemblage, unadorned Jerusalem oil lamps (also called 'Herodian lamps'), and burial customs. The cooking assemblage contains a cooking pot form found at Judean sites as well as in Galilee stemming from Kefar Hananya (Berlin 2014: 210). Bag jars made at Kefar Shikhin are also part of this profile. She also includes simple stone cups and plates, and at sites like Gamla Eastern Terra Sigillata plates made on the coastal cities. Her argument is that this material culture evidences a heightened 'Jewish piety' up until the time of the Judean-Roman War. However, this interpretation can be contested in several respects. First, the pottery uniformity and limited production locations suggest the interests of controlling families. In particular, the lamps point to Jerusalem interests. Furthermore, Berlin acknowledges that while Galileans are eating with very simple cooking technology, wealthy Jerusalem houses contain imported wares from the Mediterranean and Nabataea. Would it not be more natural to think that Galileans are very poor and positioned within distribution networks of powerful Judean and Galilean families? As for *miqva'oth*, it is claimed that over 300 are known (Berlin 2005: 253, 700 according to Magness 2011: 16). However, the rush to see these as ritual purity baths seems anachronistically to read in rabbinic values and institutions from the second century CE. Ritual baths in the upper city of Sepphoris are credible as Sepphoris was a priestly city. Large *miqva'oth* such as at Gamla may have functioned like showers in modern electronics manufactories—that is, to cleanse workers for the production of pure wine for the temple (Magness 2011: 16–17). This could also make sense of other *miqva'oth*, as evidence of production for the temple.

Still, Berlin's synthesis does not mention where grain would be stored, and at least some of these *miqva'oth* could be reservoirs with other functional purposes. (In the Hebrew Bible, the word *miqveh* can refer to collections of other things besides water, and even figuratively of associations of people.) That peasants stored grain in underground areas is known from excavations at Nazareth. Underground areas at other Galilean sites may likewise have functioned as food storage areas (Aviam 2004: 123–132). Arabs in the late Ottoman period stored dry figs in a hiding place called

Figure 5.11 The theater at Sepphoris. Photo Douglas E. Oakman

mikhba (Grant 1921: 139). Likewise, stone vessels in Galilee have not displaced hard-fired ceramics in commoner contexts. If these vessels are evidence for priestly purity concerns, then it seems most probable that they are restricted to domestic contexts of those families or to priestly clients and domains in Galilee. Many Galileans were either disinterested in purity laws or were incapable of observing them. Yohanan ben Zakkai's statement, 'Galilee, you hate the Torah,' needs to be kept in mind (y. Shabbat 16:7, 15d). And certainly, even in the second century, the rabbis berated the *amme ha-aretz* ('people of the land,' i.e., either landowners or villagers) for their disregard of Torah strictures. Through most of the second century CE, the rabbis were not very influential in Galilee (Goodman 1983: 102–111; Hezser 1997: 386–399; Freyne 2014: 133, 156).

It is notable, then, that neither Q nor Mark identify Jesus as a 'Judean,' nor employ the explicit term *Ioudaios* in any significant measure. In the Q story of the centurion's slave (Luke 7:1–10), the centurion (understood here as commanding a unit in Herod's mercenary army) is shown as a patron of *Ioudaioi* who built the synagogue in Capernaum. Such patronage of local building projects is well known in the inscriptions of Syria and Arabia (Grainger 1995). Then, the centurion addresses Jesus directly to broker God's healing patronage for the benefit of the slave (and centurion). Regarding the faith of the centurion, Jesus remarks that he has not found such faith *in Israel*. Israel is the more comprehensive term, with scope far beyond the ethnos of Judea (Freyne 2014: 143, 168). Q and Mark otherwise associate Judeans only with John the Baptist, and Mark uses the term in relation to Jesus only in the title 'King of the Judeans.' This information is obviously important in showing that 'Judeans' were more an elite presence in Galilee and expressive of the projected power of Jerusalem elites. Conversely, it says something about the interests of the scribes of the earliest Jesus traditions, and how their interests may have coincided with those of Jesus.

Pharisees from Jerusalem are mostly in conflict with Jesus in deuteronomic Q and Mark. These Pharisees sensibly were there to look after priestly and temple interests in Galilee. Their scribes promoted especially strict sabbath observance, tithing (extra temple liens), and ritual purity at meals. Sepphoris was a home for priestly elites, and their lands presumably were spread across Lower Galilee. Further, they controlled the pottery industry at Shikhin, and for their loyalty in the Judean-Roman War their villages (such as Khirbet Qana) were spared destruction. There is no mention of Pharisees in earliest wisdom Q. Deuteronomic Q includes the 'Woes' against the Pharisees in relation to tithing and purity (11:41–42; Magness 2011: 21–24). For Mark, conflicts more frequently center around sabbath observance (Mark 3:2), though there is also concern over purity (Mark 7:1–8). The same tensions are felt in Josephus's *Life*, as he leads an armed force and comes into conflict with Galilean elite factions. Josephus is in Galilee precisely to defend the interests of powerful Jerusalem priestly groups, and it seems more that he is on the side of those who will surrender to Rome to preserve their own privilege. (This certainly is how things played out for Josephus himself; he was rewarded for surrender.)

The scribes of the latest stage of Q can be characterized by their interest in John and Jesus as eschatological prophets in the line of deuteronomic prophets. If earliest wisdom Q was produced by scribes in the Herodian administration of the lake, then deuteronomic Q most likely emerged from scribal groups in Sepphoris after the transfer of the archives from Tiberias under Nero and Agrippa II. Deuteronomy emphasizes the sole worth of the God of Israel and 'all Israel.' The Gospel of Mark likewise 'reads' John and Jesus as eschatological prophets in the mold of Elijah (Mark 1:2; Mal 4:5). Zvi Zahavy (1990) has identified non-Jerusalem scribes in early rabbinism who emphasized the Shema' and the Exodus over Jerusalem scribes who sponsored the Amidah. The Q scribes of Sepphoris likely affiliated in Galilee with the former groups. Their conflict with scribes of the Jerusalem Pharisee groups is thus understandable. Their interest in Jesus sensibly derived from his central concern with God's Kingdom and with the Exodus at Passover. Consider Mark 12:28 for an example of a scribe who probably would be sympathetic as well to the Q tradents. Hence, the scribes and Pharisees in Galilee representing the interests of Jerusalem, the temple, and priests came into conflict with Jesus in ways that involved both ideology and material concerns.

Figure 5.12 Courtyard from a house in Khirbet Qana. Photo Douglas E. Oakman

Jesus and the Kingdom of God in Galilee

All contemporary Jesus scholars concede that Jesus' central concern was expressed through the metaphor 'Kingdom of God.' How to construe this has long been discussed. The two major options are first the eschatological rule of God as found in Second Temple literature like Daniel 7 or in the Dead Sea Scrolls. This is indeed how Jesus is presented in both Q and Mark. However, the second option is that Jesus sees this rule as 'real and present' in the fields, natural world, and human relations of his Galilee. In the one view, Jesus' parables and sayings will warn of imminent catastrophe and reveal the opportunity to respond before the final Judgment; in the other view, the parables and sayings invite hearers to decide how they must act in the presence of this Power.

The tension between the eschatological outlook of the Synoptic Gospels (and deuteronomic Q's and Mark's construal of John and Jesus as eschatological prophets) and the natural theology elements of the earliest Jesus traditions in wisdom Q have led to extended arguments about the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist. For Meier, Allison, and Freyne, for instance, Jesus' apocalyptic eschatology is largely in accord with the Baptist's (Meier 1991–2009: 2:19–181; Allison 2010: 31–220; Freyne 2014: 134–139). Paul Hollenbach and John Dominic Crossan, by contrast, argue that Jesus broke with the Baptist (Hollenbach 1982; Crossan 1991: 237–238). This alternative seems more likely, and the peasant artisan Jesus is hardly an eschatological prophet (Oakman 2012: 81). This, rather, is the portrayal of him given in the earliest sources Q and Mark. Peasant theology (ideology) is immediate and concrete (Oakman 2012: 75). The Prayer of Jesus is about immediate human need, in particular the deadly mortgage of debt upon adequate subsistence and free life. Jesus the peasant artisan seems best understood as a village sage whose wide travels garnered a unique social experience and wisdom. Under the dominant metaphor of the Kingdom of God, Jesus spoke of the real presence of God in the midst of perceived Galilean social problems.

For Jesus, God's Kingdom is closely associated with Israel's story of liberation in the Exodus. Jesus identifies himself with the Passover bread and wine in the traditions of the Passion Narrative. And these political interests eventually call Jesus to the attention of the authorities as well as the scribes behind Q.

Though the meanings of the parables of Jesus will continue to be debated, it is generally conceded that they had to do with Jesus' central interests, concerns, and praxis. The parables and sayings of Jesus again and again point to the everyday situations of Galilee. The eschatological readings of the parables are demonstrably secondary. So, sociological imagination is called for to place their meanings firmly in the context of a colonized Galilee. Fundamental here is that God's ruling presence pertains substantively to subsistence anxiety brought on by the conflicting social goals of Galilean elites (Q 12:22–32; cf. Mark 2:19). Patronage politics imply debt and obligation, as well as required expressions of loyalty. The exploitive practices of the elites are clear (Q 19:12–27; Mark 12:38–44; Luke 16:19–31). Jesus appears to advocate a 'reverse patronage' (Q 11:4; Luke 16:4). The two revolutionary cries of antiquity were abolition of debts and redistribution of land (Lev 25:10; Oakman 2012: 102). Jesus says little about the latter issue; only Mark 10:30 or Luke 12:13–14 seem to address land issues. However, there is a clear concern for debt in the Prayer of Jesus, and radical sayings about making loans without expectation of repayment appear in Q 6:35 and *Gos. Thom.* 95.

The Parable of the Sower takes on an interesting light when one considers that it reflects sowing on marginal ground, not on fertile bottom-land. In relation to the ruling power of God, what can the Sower signify? The harvest 'despite' all the bad odds has often led to claims that it is about growth and signifies kingdom success in the face of great odds. This approach ties into concerns about temporal eschatology. More likely, the story indicates the foolhardiness of the Sower and the preposterousness of the food situation facing the average Galilean. The bottom-lands invariably belong to elite estates. The peasant is forced to eke out a living even on marginal lands and rocky soils. In sum, the Sower signifies 'the Ruling God has compassion over subsistence anxiety.' Q 9:58 again suggests that the *huios tou anthropou* (Aramaic *bar 'enash*), 'the Galilean commoner,' is homeless! Interestingly, the term *huios tou anthropou* also appears in a wisdom Q context at 6:22 and need not signify there the eschatological figure of deuteronomic Q. Both 6:22 and 9:58 show that Jesus is vexed about the shameful plight of commoners. There is a sense of this meaning as well in the suffering Markan *huios tou anthropou*. Of course, wisdom Q contains the discourse on anxiety 12:22–32.

In addition to the parables, Jesus' sayings, and maxims especially found in the early Q material point to social and political meanings. Q 9:58 saying 'foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests' can be a veiled comment about the ease and plenty of both Herod Antipas and the people of Sepphoris. Their stores are full, and they perch (like birds, *zipporí*) securely. That foxes and birds are also a natural threat to the fields will not go unnoticed by the villagers and villages owned by Sepphoris! The elites are parasites upon the countryside! Interestingly, John Pairman Brown points to a parallel to Q 9:58 in Plutarch's biography of Tiberius Gracchus: 'The wild beasts that roam over Italy have a hole, to each is its lair or nest; but the men who fight and die for Italy have no share in anything but air and sunshine' (1991, after Toynbee). Were the early Q tradents then familiar with agrarian problems in other parts of the Roman world? Their concern for wisdom would suggest a broader horizon of knowledge (Kloppenborg 2000: 200).

Q 16:13, 'You cannot serve God and Mammon,' stands in close connection with the Dishonest Steward parable where rents in kind would naturally imply need for storage. Far from being advice on investment strategies, Mammon here signifies more generally than money the security arrangements—the treasury and storehouse—that the provincial elites trust (which seems to be at the Semitic root of the word) to hedge about their estates. Luke's Rich Fool (Luke 12) will build more barns (*apothēkaí*), and in the end trusts the wrong things and has the wrong investment calculus. These suggest that Jesus was more interested in immediate access to adequate food resources, or in acquiring it for others.

The critiques of Mammon and Debt are leveled at the patronage politics of Galilee that keep most everyone in dependent and servile status. The Prayer of Jesus (the Lord's Prayer) encapsulates the concern with debt as it endangers secure subsistence. In particular, the second table links the interlocking concerns of inadequate bread, debt, and courts that serve creditors (Oakman 2008: 199–242, 2014b: 42–91). This concern is also visible in wisdom Q 12:58–59 where the creditor's court and debtor's prison are mentioned in the same breath.

The feeding stories associate secure food with God's ruling power. The feeding of the 5,000 men centers on adequacy of bread and fish, which were the staples of Galilee. (Five loaves and two fish are probably a 'subsistence unit,' perhaps for a day for a peasant family or a week for a single person.) In general, the stories of healing and exorcism express Jesus' ability to broker help in the name of the Kingdom of God. So Crossan has said on the basis of Q 10:8–9 and parallel in *Gos. Thom.* 14 that eating and healing were at the center of Jesus' concerns (1991: 332–333). God's presence indeed can be compared to a wedding feast (Mark 2:19).

For Jesus' in-group, God's patronage was expressed in the address to God as '*Abba*,' Aramaic for Father. This implies that Jesus' group and network were a fictive family, though not exclusive about membership. Jesus' conflict with the purity standards of the Pharisees in part had to do with his willingness to accept the outcasts, the 'tax collectors and sinners,' and to cross lines that Judean purity standards would not allow. The sharing ethic of the Jesus network counteracted the threats to adequate subsistence by so to speak building capacity to supply acute need. The healing and feeding narratives express this capacity. Jesus as broker of God's ruling power developed a network of powerful friends among the 'haves' and the reputation for brokering real goods for the 'have-nots.' Upon this fictive kin network and reputation of effective connection with God's present power would later be built the earliest christological claims and Christ-believing communities. Central to the life of their assemblies (*ekklēsiai*) was Jesus' Passover table and his continuing mediation (as a broker) with God even after his death (Hebrews 8:6; 9:15).

Developments after Jesus

Jesus' lasting influence in Galilee seems to have been minimal. His failure to address land redistribution or land tenure issues, despite his concerns about debt and insecure subsistence, made his vision unattractive to conservative peasant villagers. For the elites, calls for debt release were enough to indict and convict. There is no evidence of a Galilean Jesus movement after Jesus' death. Close associates like Peter leave Galilee after the crucifixion; James the son of Zebedee and James the brother of the Lord are killed in Judea. The 'Jesus movement,' it seems, takes form and shape in the post-Easter period in Jerusalem. From there, of course it moves to Syria and Egypt, and via Paul and others to Asia and Europe. Christians are first identified as a distinct group in 1 Peter 4 in Roman Asia and in Syrian Antioch (Acts 11:26). How Christianity reached Rome is uncertain, but it was certainly there when Paul wrote his letter to Rome *c.* 56 CE. The most remarkable thing to remember, and perhaps one of the greatest events in the history of religions, was the transformation of the message and influence of a provincial and rural peasant artisan into a predominately urban movement and universal salvation religion that eventually triumphed over Roman imperial power!

Notes

1 Professor Freyne lamentably died in 2013. He provided judicious assessments of Galilee studies in Freyne 2007. His final comprehensive views on the Galilean world of Jesus have been published posthumously (2014).
2 Without a doubt, however, both Q and Mark reflect scribal readings of Jesus that do in fact invoke northern Israelite keynotes (Moses, Elijah) and scribal interests not entirely sympathetic with Judean interests in Galilee.
3 Q by scholarly convention is cited by position in the Gospel of Luke. See Robinson *et al.* 2000. For details on the stratigraphic hypothesis, see Kloppenborg 2000: 143–165; for critique of the stratified Q hypothesis, see Tuckett 1996: 69–74.

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6
EARLY JEWISH CHRISTIANITY

Edwin K. Broadhead

Patristic writers insisted that Jewish Christianity emerged as a late hybrid of Judaism and Christianity, and they labeled as heretics groups such as Nazarenes, Ebionites, Elkesaites, Cerinthians, Symmacheans, and Judaizers. Most of church history and much of critical scholarship has accepted this patristic critique. Careful critical analysis, however, unveils a sharply different reality.

Jewish Christianity in the history of scholarship

The terms *Jewish Christian* and *Jewish Christianity* are not used anywhere in antiquity. These designations emerge only in the wake of the Enlightenment and English Deism.[1] John Toland (1718) argued that Jewish Christians such as Nazarenes and Ebionites were the earliest form of Christianity, and Toland contrasted these with a Pauline Gentile Christianity. By 1740 Thomas Morgan contrasted Jewish Christians or Christian Jews as a negative parallel to the natural religion sponsored by Paul (Kümmel 1972: 56).

The ideas of the Deists made their way into Germany, and there interest in Jewish Christianity flourished. Johann Semmler, writing from 1771–75, initiated a type of critical analysis when he sought to divide the books of the New Testament according to their origin in Jewish Christian or Gentile Christian communities (Kümmel 1972: 67–8). In a similar way, Johann Michaelis in 1771 distinguished between Christians of Jewish and Gentile origin (Michaelis 1788). By 1776 Gerhard Lessing would connect the idea of a primitive Nazarene gospel to the comments of Papias and Jerome in an attempt to reconstruct the foundational stages of the Christian religion (Frey 2010: 94–8). While most retained the negative contrast found in much of English Deism, a few scholars began to see in Jewish Christianity a positive, foundational image. Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860) would posit the contrast between such early groups as a key component in the synthesis from which Christianity emerged.

Baur thus placed Jewish Christianity on the map of the ancient world and made it a primary factor in the history of primitive Christianity. In Baur's model, Jewish Christians were the oldest party and could trace their origins to apostles who knew Jesus. Baur believed Jewish Christians dominated the Jerusalem church, they were foundational to the church at Rome, and they were behind opposition to Paul in Galatia, Philippi, and Corinth. They emerged in church history as the Ebionite sect, and they can be seen in the conflict narrated in the Pseudo-Clementine writings. For Baur, the reconciliation between Paulinists and Jewish Christians was the generative factor behind the emergence of the Catholic church.

From Toland and the Deists through Baur and into the modern era, the question of Jewish Christianity has left a decisive imprint on the history of critical scholarship, and it continues to impose itself onto literary and historical studies. This can be seen in two areas of current New Testament scholarship: (1) the presumed 'parting of the ways' between Judaism and Christianity, and (2) the developmental history of primitive Christianity.

Toward a definition of Jewish Christianity

The question of how to define Jewish Christianity has emerged anew in recent scholarship. James Carleton Paget (1999) notes three major trends.[2] The first of these is an ethnic definition: 'a Jewish Christian was a Jew who became a Christian' (1999: 733).[3] A second approach is praxis-based: 'a Jewish Christian is someone who accepts the messianic status of Jesus . . . but feels it is necessary to keep, or perhaps adopt practices associated with Judaism' (1999: 734). A third pattern seeks a common set of ideological and doctrinal issues (1999: 736–39). A fourth way sees anti-Paulinism as an intrinsic trait of Jewish Christianity (Baur 1831; Lüdemann 1989).

Jörg Frey notes how dogmatic interests may shape the decisions about which groups and texts are designated as Jewish Christian (2010: 93–8). The designation is sometimes based on ethnic origin, sometimes on practices, and sometimes on theological differences with the Great Church tradition. These ancient elements reappear in various combinations in modern attempts at definition. Frey (2010: 98) concludes:

> The most practical approach is certainly a cumulative determination of Jewish Christian identity which is based on a conscious foundation of Jewish Torah observance and reckons with a continuing connection to synagogue Judaism, but does not presume the necessity of fixed theological positions. Anything more than this relatively open definition appears, in light of the fragmentary nature of the source materials, hardly possible. Because of the difficult nature of the source materials, further concretization beyond this relatively open definition is hardly possible.

Any nomenclature and definition must be relevant for both the ancient evidence and for the modern history of research. Thus, the label *Jewish Christianity* will be used here as metalanguage—as a synthesizing construct of modern scholarship. Various groups in antiquity who exhibit Jewish ways of following Jesus will thus be labeled as *Jewish Christianities*. In this definition, both their Jewishness and their connection to Jesus are expressions of a continuing covenant between Israel and God. Jewish Christianity is thus, in my formulation, a scholarly label for *persons and groups in antiquity whose historical profile suggests they both follow Jesus and maintain Jewishness and that they do so as a continuation of God's covenant with Israel*.

Points of origin

Jewish Christianity has key points of origin. Among these are the Jewishness of Jesus, the earliest communities of Jesus' followers, and the earliest writings from these communities.

Jesus the Jew

Numerous scholars have interpreted the perceived distance of Jesus from Temple, scribe, Sadducee, Pharisee, and Zealot to be a distance from Judaism. More careful investigations, however, have shown that Jewishness in the first century of the common era was a widely variegated religious phenomenon, both in doctrine and in practice. Closer analysis suggests that the eccentricity of Jesus fits in a general way within the complexity of first-century expressions of Jewishness.

Jesus was, however, almost certainly distinguished by his association with John the Baptist and by his obsession with the coming Reign of God. In this light, Jesus re-evaluated the power of Rome, the authority of the Temple, the role of holiness and purity, and the practice of the law. More significantly, Jesus saw his own identity and mission—and that of his followers—in the light of the coming Kingdom of God. This vision for the dramatic fall and rise of Israel was deeply rooted in the stories and visions of her prophets, and his life likely represents an attempt to recover the prophetic traditions of Israel. As a consequence, all descriptions of the historical figure of Jesus must begin and end with his profile as a Jewish prophetic figure.

The religious map of antiquity looks quite different when Jesus is separated out from Christianity and resituated as a historical figure wholly within the variegated framework of first-century Judaism. If Jesus is a Jewish prophetic figure, it is also reasonable to expect that a prophetic, revisionist form of Jewishness will dominate among the earliest communities of his followers and within the earliest texts produced by those communities.

The earliest communities of Jesus' followers

The earliest Christian communities arose in a variety of locales and contexts between the death of Jesus and the framing of Nicene orthodoxy (325 CE). Most communities claimed to be rooted in some form of apostolic tradition, and this claim to apostolic, Jewish origins takes two distinct forms: intrinsic and constructed.

Constructed connections are extrinsic to the structure, location, and ideology of the community. These serve as a type of *gemeindegründungslegende* (foundational myth): their function is to legitimize a community that often stands at some distance from any apostolic orientation. Such constructions root the community in Jewish Christian persons, but not in Jewish Christian ideas and practices.

In contrast, some communities show intrinsic connections to the Jewishness of the apostolic era. Chief among these are literary connections, theological focus, archeological data, and sociological profiles. The four primary sees of orthodox Christianity—Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Alexandria—each present evidence of a formative period under the influence of some type of Jewish Christianity (Broadhead 2010: 80–160). Furthermore, in each of these four major communities, the memory of the formative role of Jewish Christianity endures in the face of changing identity.

The earliest writings

Do the earliest Christian writings reflect groups who both follow Jesus and maintain Jewishness? This is certainly true in a general sense. Early Christian writings borrowed Jewish frameworks such as apocalypticism and drew upon Jewish ideas such as Wisdom. Furthermore, almost all Christian writings draw in some degree upon the Hebrew Bible. Standing out from this general legacy, however, are a few works that suggest a unique connection to some form of Jewish Christianity.

First, a few of the texts and traditions under consideration may be Jewish, but not Christian. This is plausible for the *Two Ways Tradition* and the earliest forms of the Sermon on the Mount. This is possible, but less plausible, for materials used in the canonical books of James, Jude, and 2 Peter.

Second, some texts and traditions can only be explained in terms of Jewish Christianity. In its present state of reconstruction, the Sayings Tradition (referred to by the term *Q* in most scholarship) says nothing of the Christian kerygma based on the death and resurrection of Jesus, it says nothing of a Christian movement, and it does not describe Jesus by the Christ title. The earliest tradents of the Sayings Tradition appear to be Jews who follow Jesus and, like him, expect the imminent reformation and revitalization of Israel. William Arnal discusses the role of village scribes as the tradents of this tradition (2001).

The canonical book of James reflects some form of Jewish Christianity. The tradents of this material have embraced Greek language and rhetoric, but the conceptual world is one of Jewish paraenesis and eschatology held by followers of Jesus and practiced in a synagogue setting.

The canonical books of Jude and 2 Peter possibly reflect a similar identity. While Jude is addressed to a later, Greek-speaking context, it draws upon the literature and the conceptual world of Palestinian Judaism to call for a renewed faithfulness to Jesus. The Jewish Christian content of Jude, but also its conceptual framework, are used in 2 Peter to stir up eschatological zeal and endurance among the followers of Jesus.

The *Didache* presumes a Jewish community that seeks to distinguish itself from some other Jews. The Jewish Christian identity of the *Didache* is particularly evident in its use of the *Two Ways Tradition*. Here following Jesus is presented as a way of fulfilling a Jewish paranetic tradition.

The Gospel of Matthew envisions a mission to the nations and becomes the favorite gospel of Gentile Christianity. Its identity, however, is best explained in terms of a Jewish Christianity negotiating its way between its past and its vision of the future. The Gospel of Matthew seeks to facilitate this transition by incorporating numerous traditions, most, if not all of which can be explained in terms of Jewish Christianity. The Gospel of Matthew respects these traditions, recognizes their authority, and incorporates them into a gospel oriented in three directions: (1) continuity with the Jesus movement; (2) a polemic against some other Jews; and (3) a mission to the nations.

Summation

These insights may help to clarify the origins of Jewish Christianity and its place on the religious map of antiquity. The historical profile of Jesus reveals a prophetic Jewish figure proclaiming an eschatological message of the coming of God's Kingdom. Jesus' first followers were Jews who saw in him the promised messiah, and this is reflected in the nature of the earliest communities and in the character of the texts they produced.

Patristic representations

Do patristic writings point to groups in antiquity who seek to fulfill God's covenant with Israel by both following Jesus and maintaining Jewishness?

Literary representation

Patristic writers offer a literary representation of Jewish Christianity that is extensive, variegated, creative, and contradictory (Broadhead 2010: 161–251). Its development is marked by layers of repetition and accretion. Two hermeneutical designs control this complicated presentation.

The patristic representation of the sects is dominated by the *hermeneutics of heresiology*. Although the rubric of church history is sometimes used, the patristic representation of the sects functions as a rhetoric of dismissal. The hermeneutics of heresiology determine the form and style of the presentation, its tone, and its rhetorical strategy.

In contrast to this hermeneutics of heresiology, the patristic representation of the Judaizers is controlled by the *hermeneutics of reproof*. In contrast to the rhetoric of exclusion, this approach is centripetal: it defines the boundary between church and synagogue and seeks to reclaim and maintain its own.

Traditions

Major streams of tradition flow through the larger patristic representation of Jewish Christianity. The most significant of these is a mapping process that involves the naming and locating of heresies. The tools employed in the characterization of the sects—name, beliefs and practices, founder, location, history, consequences, dismissal—all serve to name the heresy and to locate it outside the boundaries of the church.

A second major line of tradition is evident in the foundational myths framed around biographical sketches. In the logic of this worldview, it is clear, for example, that Ebionites were founded by Ebion and that Symmachus was followed by Symmachians.[4]

A third major line of tradition is found in the need to create overarching categories of heresy. Presuming shared ideas, practices, books, histories, and territories, a few major types such as Gnostics and Ebionites are used to locate heretical groups on the religious map of antiquity.

A fourth line of tradition describes the inevitable consequences of such heresies. According to patristic accounts, false doctrine, evil practice, idolatry, and libertinism all follow in the wake of such movements.

The fifth stream of tradition describes a history of rejection. Apostles are said to have rebuked such heretics and to have fled from their presence. Biblical texts are employed to refute them, as are truth, logic, common sense, and orthodoxy. Heretics are, in patristic perspective, guilty by association. As a final resort, dismissal by definition is practiced.

Historical analysis

Literary representations such as the patristic reports sustain various streams of tradition, and some elements of these traditions may point to historical realities.

General plausibility

The patristic representation of Jewish Christianity offers lines of general plausibility. First, the nature of the patristic portrait—its extent, its diversity, its intensity—makes it probable that Jewish Christianity represents a historical entity. It would be extremely difficult to explain such a patristic assault in the absence of any historical threat.

Second, the variegated nature of Jewish Christianity suggests a general plausibility. The beliefs and practices assigned to Jewish Christians demonstrate a large measure of contradiction, confusion, carelessness, and incompetence. The most plausible explanation is that patristic writers magnify and confuse an existing diversity.

Third, the interconnected nature assigned to Jewish Christian sects contains a general level of plausibility. It is almost impossible that sects such as Ebionites and Cerinthians held the wide range of diversities and dependencies assigned to them by Epiphanius. But it is highly plausible that different sects were related in a variety of ways.

Furthermore, Jewish Christian sects could be expected to relate in differing ways to movements such as gnosticism, philosophical schools, paganism, magic, and others. While the patristic portrait is hyperbolic, the interconnected nature of individual sects contains a reasonable level of historical plausibility.

A fourth area of general plausibility may be reflected in the perceived threat represented by Jewish Christianity. Christian orthodoxy finds real resistance in areas such as Egypt and Syria, and it is faced in general by two distinct disadvantages: it lacked the official tolerance extended by Rome to Judaism, and Christian movements had to explain themselves in light of their Jewish roots. The enduring stance of defensiveness, hostility, and even paranoia that marks the Christian response to Judaism was likely practiced as well against Jewish Christian sects.

A fifth area of general plausibility may be found in the vitality and endurance of Jewish Christianity. While much of the patristic representation is developed through repetition, accretion, and expansion, this does not offer a sufficient explanation for the persistent reference to Jewish Christian movements. As in most polemical literature, the insistent response suggests a persistent question.

Particular plausibility

In addition to the general realm of plausibilities, some specific aspects of the patristic representation of Jewish Christianity are plausible. First, there is historical plausibility in the distinct portrait of the Nazarenes or Nazoreans (Broadhead 2010: 163–87). While the distinction between two types

of Ebionites was noted earlier, it is Jerome who locates Nazarenes as a specific historical group. Although Epiphanius disagrees with Jerome's general assessment, he confirms the core representation. Nazarenes are described as Jewish followers of Jesus who observe the law. They are said to be found in the area of Syrian Beroea in the last half of the fourth century. They are credited with a noteworthy Hebraic tradition that includes both texts and commentaries. They are ignored or tolerated for most of the patristic period, and their assignment to the list of heresies is quite late.

Second, strands of historical plausibility reside in the characterization of the Ebionites (Broadhead 2010: 188–212). The larger representation of Ebionites—as a collective heresy that incorporates almost every trend known to patristic writers—is untenable. It is plausible, however, that some pieces of this collective portrait have historical grounding. Patristic responses to Ebionite use of scripture, citations from Ebionite gospels, and reference to geographical location may provide historical markers. Multiple attestation from different contexts increases the level of plausibility.

Third, there is a strong probability that Jewish Christians defended their faith and practice by citing a saying of Jesus from Matt. 10.24–25 (Broadhead 2010: 211–12): 'A disciple is not above the teacher, nor the slave above the master. It is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master.' Several patristic writers note the use of the saying by the Ebionites.[5] Different patristic writers connect the saying to different Ebionite practices, providing multiple attestation. The criterion of dissimilarity applies, as does the criterion of embarrassment. Patristic writers find it difficult or impossible to refute this claim, yet they persist in the effort. This makes it, by all critical standards, highly unlikely that this is a patristic invention. Some Jewish Christians claimed that their practices of circumcision, observance of Passover, and obedience to the law are a conscious imitation of Jesus, and they supported this claim by citing Matt. 10.24–25. This is the most certifiable piece of historical data in all of the patristic representations of Jewish Christianity.

Fourth, Origen (*de princ.* 4.3.8) notes that some Jewish Christians invoke the words of Matt. 10.5–6 that Jesus came only for the lost sheep of Israel. Patristic writers cannot answer this Jewish Christian claim, and they certainly did not invent it.

Fifth, there is historical plausibility in the patristic references to Jewish Christian gospels and other texts.

Sixth, the process identified as Judaizing likely contains strands of historical plausibility. Historical plausibility is not to be found in the patristic portrait of Judaizers, but rather in the underlying motivation for the patristic reproof.

Conclusion

While Jewish Christians are known primarily through patristic writings, they are also known despite patristic efforts to dismiss them. Employing the hermeneutics of heresiology and the hermeneutics of reproof, patristic authors have written over the stories of Jewish Christianity. As a consequence, Jewish Christianity, particularly as it is represented in the patristic era, can only be recognized through an intentional, critical process of rediscovery, reconstruction, and redefinition.

Such critical analysis suggests that showing through the fabric of the patristic accounts are significant markers that might serve as keys to the historical location of Jewish Christianity. These markers support a general realm of plausibility: Jewish Christianity existed as a vital, enduring movement and presented a variety of forms, locations, and connections. These markers also support the historical plausibility of specific traits: Nazarenes wrote texts from Syrian Beroea; some groups of Ebionites are historical; Jewish Christians claimed to imitate Jesus and cited his words; they preserved a significant textual tradition; despite the efforts of Christian leaders, some believers continued to live between church and synagogue. Such markers make it difficult to deny the ongoing presence and impact of various forms of Jewish Christianity.

Jewish Christian texts

Several patristic writers refer to Jewish Christian gospels, with some offering citations. Such references and citations, however, are fragmentary and selective, they are often conflated, and they serve almost exclusively in the patristic rejection of heresy. In addition to these, a few manuscripts of canonical texts offer marginal references to Jewish Christian gospels.

Scholars have reached a general consensus that the tradition of Jewish Christian gospels is represented in three specific texts: the Gospel of the Nazoreans, the Gospel of the Ebionites, and the Gospel according to the Hebrews.[6]

The Gospel of the Nazoreans is the most transparent piece of the Jewish Gospel tradition. It can be placed in a specific location (Syrian Beroea), its language is known (Aramaic or Syriac), and its origin can be assigned a broad time frame (from the time of the Gospel of Matthew, 80–90 CE, until its first mention by Hegesippus in the late second century). The length and general content of the Gospel of the Nazoreans approximate that of the Gospel of Matthew. The Jewish focus of the gospel is clear from the concern for 'your brothers, sons of Abraham' (Origen, in Matt. 15.14). Testimony to its impact extends from Eusebius in the late third century up to marginal references in manuscripts of the thirteenth century.

The Gospel of the Ebionites is a Greek text known to Epiphanius and placed by him among Jewish Christian sects in the Transjordan. Its content draws in part upon the synoptic gospels, harmonizing their portraits. Its theology, however, seems to include a mix of ideas described by Epiphanius. The Gospel of the Ebionites emerges somewhere between the Gospel of Matthew (80–90 CE) and its appearance in Epiphanius (315–402/403 CE).

The Gospel according to the Hebrews may be used as early as Papias (early second century), but the first clear attestation is with Clement of Alexandria (around 150 CE). References to this gospel appear in a chain of Latin medieval writers stretching from Jerome to the twelfth century, with particular favor among English and Irish texts (Klijn 1992: 20–25). The Gospel according to the Hebrews is likely of Egyptian origin and was probably described in this manner to distinguish it from other texts. The length of the gospel is given by Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantine from 806–815 CE, as 2,200 lines, while the Gospel of Matthew had 2,500 (Vielhauer and Strecker 1991: 41–42, 172). The content and theology of the Gospel according to the Hebrews set it apart from canonical gospels and from other Jewish Christian gospels.

It is almost certain that some form of Jewish Christianity of the late second or early third century stands behind the Pseudo-Clementine material known as *Recognitions* 1.27–71 (Jones 1995: 157–67; Van Voorst 1989: 176–80). This can be seen first in its consistent focus on the land of Israel. The Christology of this document also testifies to its Jewish Christian identity: it centers on Jesus as the prophet promised by Moses, as the Jewish messiah, and as the one who completes Moses' attempt to put an end to sacrifices. Moreover, the debate about Jesus is addressed throughout to Jewish dialogue partners, engaging various segments of Judaism. There is a consistent attempt to portray faith in Jesus as the goal and fulfillment of Israel's history and faith. Finally, Paul is not opposed for his mission to the Gentiles, but rather for his intrusion into the conversion of the Jewish leaders and the people of Jerusalem.

In the mid second century, Justin Martyr, in his *Dialogue*, recognizes two types of Jewish Christians. One type insists that all Christians are obligated to follow Jewish law, while the other type does not. Justin concludes that only the second type of Jewish Christians will be saved (*Dial.* 47.1). It is clear, then, that Justin knows and even honors some forms of Jewish Christianity. It is also possible that Jewish Christian sources may underlie a significant portion of the work of Justin Martyr (Skarsaune 1987, 2007: 379–416).

The *Apocalypse of Peter* is very likely the work of Jewish Christians, and it is probably written in response to the Bar Kokhba war (132–135 CE).[7] This position is based on several factors.

1 the dating of the text;
2 its assignment to the genre of Jewish apocalyptic;
3 the reference of the text to the teachings of Jesus;
4 evidence of Bar Kokhba's harsh treatment of Jews who rejected his call to revolt.

A few other Jewish Christian texts are mentioned in patristic literature, and some citations are given (Broadhead 2010: 278–79). According to Epiphanius, Ebionites have a gospel associated with Matthew (*Pan*. 30.13.2–3), a work associated with Peter (*Periodoi Petrou*, *Pan*. 30.15.1–2), a text linked with James (*Anabathmoi Iakobou*, *Pan*. 30.16.7–9), 'other Acts of the Apostles' (*Pan*. 30.16.6), and they claim various apostolic traditions (*Pan*. 30.23.1–2).

A text known as the *Book of Elxai* is mentioned by Hippolytus, Origen, Eusebius, and Epiphanius. The book seems to be a Jewish apocalyptic work that originates in Parthia in response to the invasion of Trajan (114–117 CE). It was brought to Rome and used in a Christian debate by Alcibiades (Broadhead 2010: 213–22).

Reference is made on occasion to a Gospel according to the Apostles (Jerome, *adv. Pelag*. 3.2, implied perhaps in Epiphanius, *Pan*. 30.13.2–3). If such a text existed, its title suggests that it is Jewish Christian in orientation.

Jerome knows a version of the book of Jeremiah that belongs to the Nazoreans (Broadhead 2010: 163–87). He claims to have seen this text, and he uses it in his commentary on Matt. 27.9–10. Here the Gospel of Matthew attributes to Jeremiah a citation that is actually found in Zechariah. Jerome says this citation is indeed found in the version of Jeremiah used by the Nazoreans.

Jerome knows a Nazorean commentary on the book of Isaiah. The passages cited by Jerome[8] show that Nazoreans are well-versed in Hebrew and in Hebrew texts, they are acquainted with the targumic tradition of biblical commentaries, they know about rabbinic tradition but reject its authority, and they reject the oral tradition in favor of their own interpretation of scripture. They accept the apostleship of Paul and affirm a mission to the Gentiles, and they still hope for a renewed mission to the Jews.

From a critical historical perspective, it is not likely that the extent and the impact of Jewish Christian texts were overstated by the emerging Christian orthodoxy. Indeed, it is more probable that the extent and the impact of these traditions were understated, underrepresented, and undervalued.

Rabbinic evidence

When read critically, a few rabbinic traditions scattered across various stages of the tradition seem to reflect an ongoing conversation with Jewish followers of Jesus (Broadhead 2010: 284–300). First, the characterization of Jesus as a Jewish heretic is present in some passages. This characterization is applied as well to his followers: his disciples were executed on scriptural grounds, and followers like Jacob continue to trouble the rabbis. Second, among the variety of Jews who fall under the category of *min* are Jewish Christians. Third, in some times and places, Jesus and his followers may be one target of a synagogue curse against heretics. Fourth, rabbinic traditions seem to exhibit some concern about Jewish Christian texts. This engagement between some rabbis and some Jewish Christians seems to endure at least into the fourth century.

Archeology

Can archeological evidence help to locate Jewish Christianity on the religious map of antiquity? The most extensive reconstruction is found in the publications of two Italian scholars working within the Franciscan order—Bellarmino Bagatti and Emmanuela Testa.[9] Bagatti and Testa looked for Jewish Christianity in distinctive ideas and practices: they interpreted mystical, apocalyptic, and gnostic forms as signals of a distinctive Jewish Christianity. Bagatti and Testa believed this group developed

a heterodox theology and venerated holy places, especially caves. Bagatti and Testa associated Jewish Christians with the *minim* slandered by the rabbis and with the Ebionite heretics abused by the Church Fathers.

Bagatti and Testa argued for a continuity of veneration for the major Christian holy places.[10] Based on their reconstruction of Jewish Christianity from literary sources, they expected to find evidence of Jewish Christian veneration beneath numerous Christian sites.

The Baggatti-Testa group claimed to find evidence of Jewish Christian holy sites in ossuaries (burial boxes), *stelai* (upright stone slabs or pillars), and in various caves and tombs. Many details of the archeological work of Bagatti and Testa have been questioned, and numerous scholars have challenged their larger model of Jewish Christianity and the holy sites. Joan Taylor (1993) gathered this evidence and added to it her own persistent critique of the work and the conclusions of the Bagatti-Testa school.[11] Her rejection of the Bagatti-Testa hypothesis of cultic continuity through heterodox Jewish Christianity is thorough and decisive.

Nonetheless, it is plausible that three sites testify to the early and continued existence of Jewish Christianity.

Capernaum

Two sites at Capernaum are of archeological interest for primitive Christianity and may bear evidence of Jewish Christianity.[12] These are the synagogue and the house of Peter.

In the western half of Capernaum an octagonal structure made of basalt was excavated in the years before and after World War I. This structure consists of three concentric octagons. The sixth-century Piacenza Pilgrim says there was a basilica in Capernaum where the house of Peter was once located.

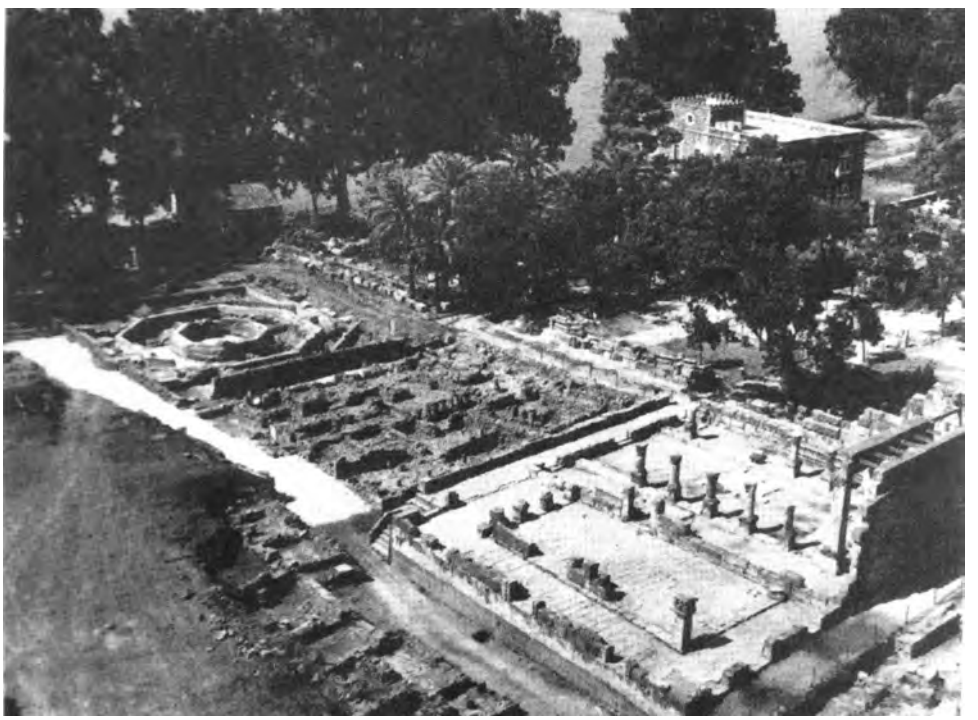

Figure 6.1 Octagonal church (left) and synagogue (right) at Capernaum. Photo from Broadhead 2010: 335; Taylor 1975: 269, courtesy of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum

In 1968, V. C. Corbo identified two major strata beneath the octagonal structure.[13] At the fourth-century level there is an enclosure wall. This enclosure is partially divided by an inner wall that runs from the southern wall into the enclosure. At the center of the enclosure is a second structure creating three small rooms and one larger room divided by an arch. There is evidence of rebuilding in some walls and in the roof. Plastered walls have been painted with plant motifs and geometric designs, and Christian graffiti is scratched upon the plaster. Two fish hooks were found in the destruction level of the fourth-century ruins. Literary testimony to this fourth-century structure is probably found in the report, recorded by Peter the Deacon, that Egeria visited Capernaum (*c.* 383 CE) and wrote that the 'house of the prince of the apostles has been made into a church, with its original walls still standing' (Taylor 1993: 276; Wilkinson 1981: 194).

Below the fourth-century strata are extensive remains from the Hellenistic/Roman period. Corbo excavated four trenches within the central area of the octagonal church (Corbo 1975: 79–98), identifying six stages, some with multiple layers. The initial fill contained pottery from the second and first centuries BCE.

These trenches represent different sequences of development and likely are part of different rooms or areas. It is clear that the small area that served as the central octagon and as the central room of the fourth-century church exhibits a history of extensive use. The debate over the details of that history is intense.

Corbo believes that the sequence of three successive beaten lime floors in the western trenches provides the key to the structure. He believes that these more elaborate and expensive floors at the center of the fourth-century church and the later octagonal church support two conclusions: this was, for an extended period, a holy site for Jewish Christians, and it was in fact the house of Peter.[14]

Joan Taylor reads the evidence in a different way (Taylor 1993: 278–84). Taylor believes that, beginning with the fourth-century house church with its beaten lime floors and continuing with the

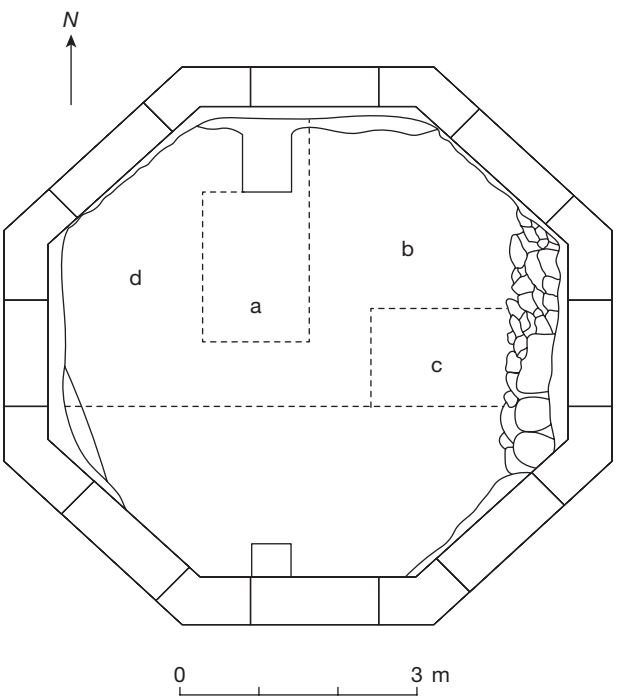

Figure 6.2 Strata in the octagonal church at Capernaum. Illustration from Broadhead 2010: 336; Taylor 1993: 271, sketch based on Corbo 1975

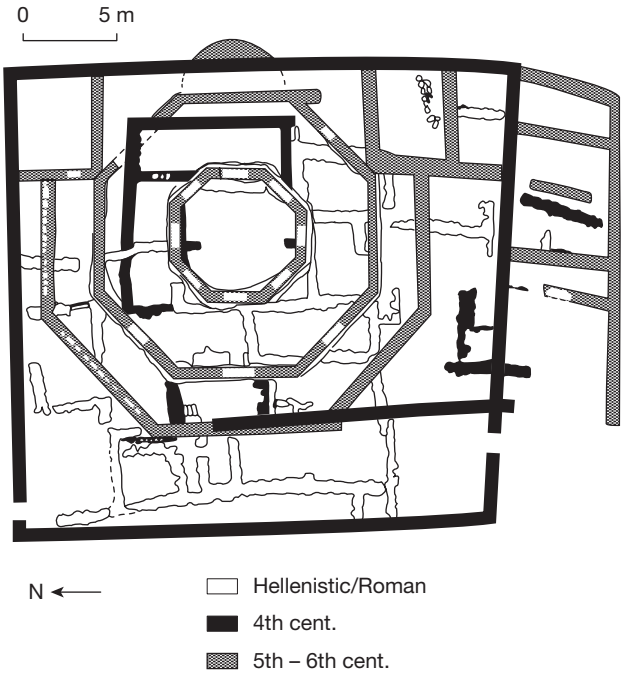

Figure 6.3 Excavation trenches within the central area of the octagonal church at Capernaum. Illustration from Broadhead 2010: 338; Taylor 1993: 279, based on Corbo 1976

later octagonal church with its peacock mosaic, Christian pilgrims traveled from various regions to visit what was described to them as the site of Peter's house—which it may have been. Thus, it is plausible that the memory of Peter's house was maintained through subsequent generations, and it is possible that the site of this house is beneath the octagonal church.

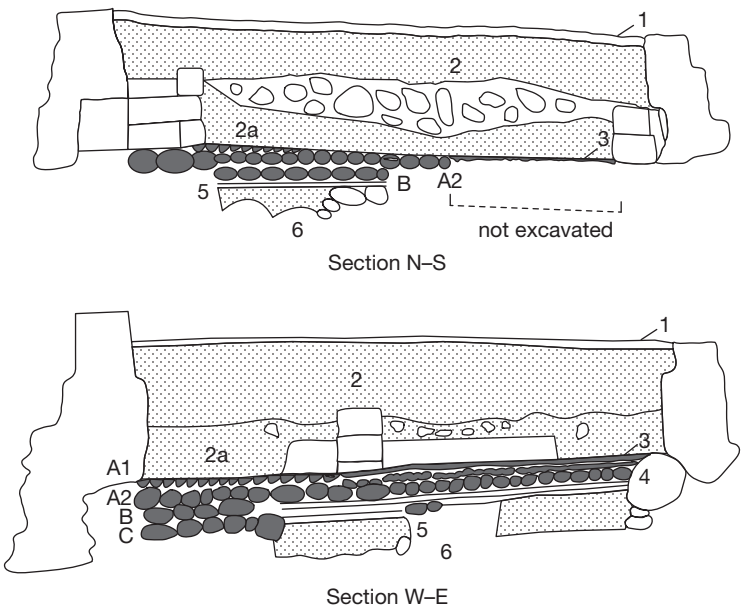

Figure 6.4 Cross section of the central area excavation of the octagonal church at Capernaum. Broadhead 2010: 338; Taylor 2010: 279, based on Corbo 1975

Some ninety meters from the octagonal church stands the site of the Capernaum synagogue. Most scholars now agree that the partially reconstructed white limestone synagogue should be dated to the fourth century CE.

The controversy lies in the dating of the black basalt structures that underlie the white synagogue. This shows, obviously, that the black basalt walls and pavement are older than the white limestone synagogue that sits upon them. Since there is no evidence of an earlier synagogue beneath the central basalt pavement of the fourth-century synagogue, the basalt layer seems to represent the first public structure on the site. The gospels say that Jesus used a synagogue in Capernaum built by a Roman centurion (Luke 7:5), and logic and literature suggest the basalt pavement and walls are the remains of that synagogue.

Mount Zion

The presence of an apostolic church on Mount Zion has been argued by Bagatti and Testa, but more recently by Bargil Pixner.[15] Pixner builds on three claims: (1) the structure on Mount Zion identified to visitors as the tomb of David is actually a synagogue from the Roman period; (2) this was a Jewish Christian synagogue; (3) this synagogue was later known as the Church of the Apostles. Pixner's argument is largely dependent on literary traditions.

Disagreement arises over the results of a 1951 study of the site by Jacob Pinkerfeld. Behind the Crusader memorial to David, Pinkerfeld identified a niche belonging to an older structure. Beneath the marble floors of the present structure, Pinkerfeld found three earlier levels. The first of these (at 12 cm) was the Crusader floor, and the second (60 cm) belonged to a Byzantine structure. At 70 cm Pinkerfeld found another plaster floor and what appeared to be remains of a stone pavement. Pinkerfeld concluded that this floor belonged to the original building, together with the northern wall and its niche.

Pinkerfeld concluded the niche and the deepest floor belonged to the same original structure, and he claimed that the niche was designed to hold a Torah scroll. On this basis, Pinkerfeld concluded the structure was a Roman era synagogue.

Pixner takes the matter a step further, arguing that this is a Jewish Christian synagogue. He contends that the synagogue is not directed toward the Temple Mount, as Pinkerfeld claimed, but is slightly askew and points toward the traditional site of Golgotha—now the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.[16]

Pixner then attempts to reconstruct the history of this synagogue, mostly from literary observations. He argues that it was built by Jewish Christians returning to Jerusalem after 70 CE upon the

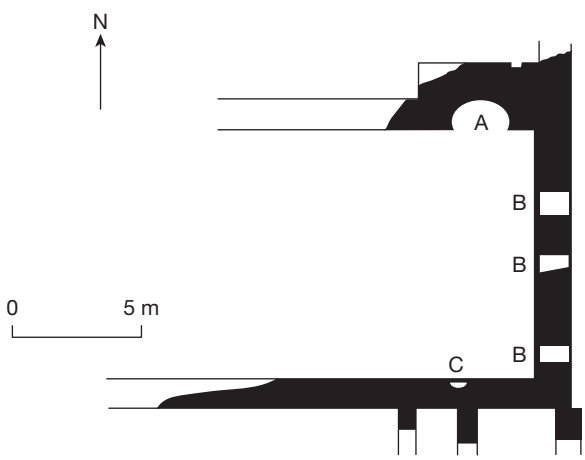

Figure 6.5 Earlier remains in the tomb of David, Mount Zion. Broadhead 2010: 317; Taylor 1993: 214, sketch adapted from Bagatti 1981

spot they considered the site of the Last Supper—the Upper Room later used by James as the center of the Jerusalem church. Pixner finds confirmation in the writings of Eusebius and various patristic works. He also draws upon the tenth-century work of Euthycius, who says the Pella community returned to Jerusalem in the early 70s CE and built their church there. Pixner suggests this event is also remembered in the Odes of Solomon (Ode 4).

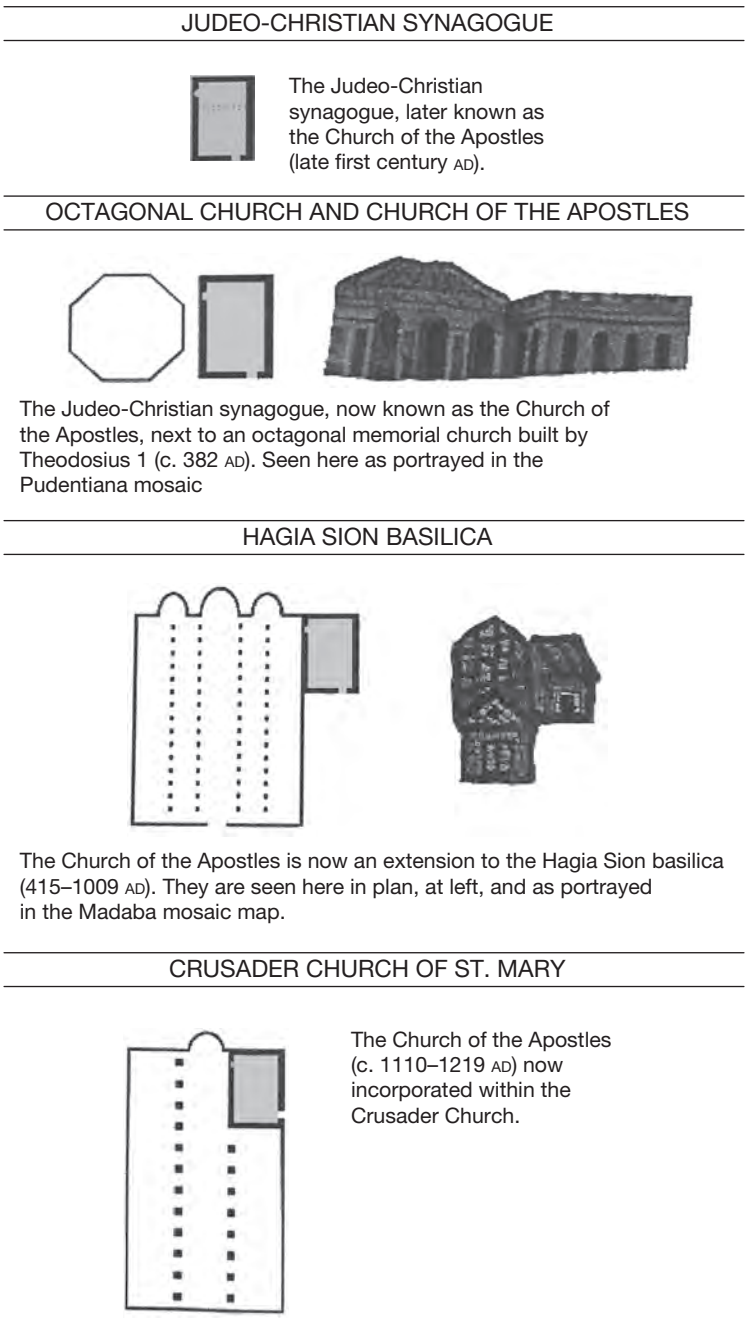

Figure 6.6 Pixner's reconstruction of the Church of the Apostles in Jerusalem. From Pixner 1990: 25

Pixner also notes the mention of a synagogue on Mount Zion by the Bordeaux Pilgrim of 333 CE. Reference to the church is given by Cyril in 348 CE and by Eucherius in 440 CE. Finally, Pixner claims that the Madaba map (sixth century) indicates that the Byzantine Hagia Sion was built alongside the Church of the Apostles, not over it.

A key problem is the sequence of layers. On this basis, Taylor and other scholars have challenged the proposal that beneath the site of Hagia Zion is a Jewish Christian structure that was the 'mother of all the churches.'[17]

The literary evidence also presents a mixed portrait. There are numerous references to the idea that the Holy Zion basilica occupies the site of an apostolic church identified with the Upper Room. This tradition is traced back to the visit of Hadrian in 133 CE.[18] However, mention of this tradition postdates the construction of the basilica of Holy Zion (likely between 333 and 348 CE). The literature reports one surviving synagogue (333 CE, but gone by 349 CE), one surviving apostolic church (purportedly 133 CE, but reported later by Cyril and by Epiphanius). However, Eusebius never mentions the survival of an early house church in Jerusalem. The merging of the two traditions—a surviving synagogue and the Church of the Apostles—seems to be found nowhere in antiquity; it was first suggested by Bagatti and Pixner.

Despite the fervor generated by this site, critical analysis allows only modest and tentative conclusions. From a literary standpoint:

1 There was a tradition that the basilica of Holy Zion was built over the Upper Room.
2 There was a tradition that one synagogue survived on Mount Zion until the time of Maximus (335–349 CE).
3 There was a tradition that the Church of the Apostles survived at least until the time of Hadrian (133 CE).
4 All reports of these traditions appear after the construction of the Holy Zion basilica (333–348 CE).
5 The association of the Church of the Apostles with the surviving synagogue is likely a modern phenomenon.

Archeological conclusions are equally meager.

1 The present 'tomb of David' and 'Upper Room' on Mount Zion are mostly Crusader constructions.
2 The Crusader construction is built upon earlier walls and foundations.
3 The earlier walls are made of recycled stones of large dimension.
4 Like some nearby Byzantine structures, the earlier layers are oriented toward the supposed tomb of Jesus.
5 One of the earliest walls contains a niche of unusual height and size.
6 The plaster scraped from the walls by Pinkerfeld contains Greek graffiti.
7 There are four floor levels within the earliest walls: the present floor level is a marble slab; 12 cm below that is a plaster floor from Crusader times; at 60 cm is a Byzantine mosaic floor; at 70 cm is the earliest floor containing both plaster and stones.

It is indeed plausible that the first meeting place of the Jerusalem community was remembered by subsequent generations and that some remnant of this site endured into the fourth century. If this was the worship center of the first generation of Jesus' followers, then it is a Jewish Christian site. It is also plausible that Jewish Christians referred to their places of worship as synagogues.[19] It is possible, then, that the basilica of Holy Zion was built on the site of the Church of the Apostles. If that is true, any archeological remains of the Church of the Apostles would likely be limited to the lowest floor level. Nothing in these remains provides meaningful information about the nature and extent of Jewish Christianity.

The Transjordan

The most plausible evidence for Jewish Christianity lies beyond the realm of Palestine and outside the debate over the continuity of Christian holy sites. In the Bashan region west of the Jordan, four separate villages have produced inscriptions that include both Jewish and Christian symbolism. In each case a *menorah* is found alongside or conjoined with Christian symbols (Broadhead 2010: 346–49; Taylor 1993: 9–41).

One inscription contains four or five variations on the menorah image, combined in one instance with a fish and perhaps a cross, in another with a palm branch. A second inscription contains a cross, a menorah, a cross with a fish, a cross inside a circle, possibly a fishing net, and four Greek letters. A third inscription contains a cross, a menorah joined with a palm branch, and what appears to be an incomplete menorah. A fourth inscription contains three menorahs, each incorporating a bar to form a type of cross.

Similar evidence was found in the same region at Khan Bandak and at Butmiyeh by Schumacher almost 100 years earlier (Schumacher 1888). In 1925, W. F. Albright found the same type of inscriptions at the village of Nawa, ten kilometers north of Farj (Albright, 1925: 5–19).

In this material from the Transjordan, the literary and material evidence appear to cohere. Farj is less than 20 kilometers from the site identified by Michael Avi-Yonah as Kokaba (or Chochaba in Hebrew). Epiphanius, who is writing to priests from Coele Syria, designates the town by both its Greek (Kokaba) and Hebrew name (Chochaba), and he is quite specific about its location. This, says Epiphanius, is the home of the Nazoreans.[20]

Figure 6.7 Inscriptions; Broadhead 2010: 347; Dauphin 1984, 1993. Drawings to scale by Shimon Gibson, used by permission of C. M. Dauphin and Shimon Gibson, captured through a tracing process by Edwin Broadhead

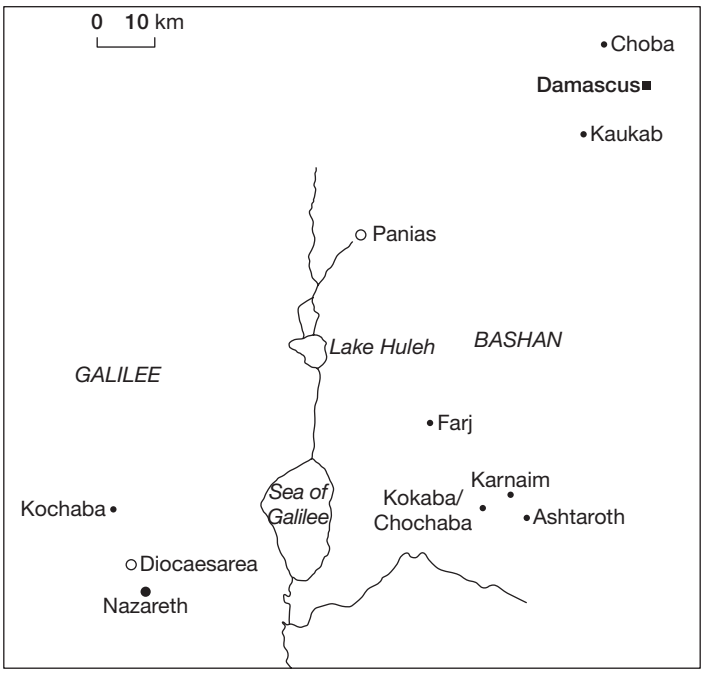

Figure 6.8 Transjordan sites, possible sites of Kochaba. Broadhead 2010: 348; Taylor 1993: 37

A second literary line coheres with the material evidence of Jewish Christianity in the Transjordan. Eusebius says that members of the Jerusalem church in the 60s CE were warned in a dream to flee the coming war with Rome. Eusebius says that they fled to Pella in the Transjordan region of Decapolis (*HE* 3.5.3). Epiphanius says that these refugees are the source of two Jewish Christian groups: Ebionites and Nazoreans (*Pan.* 29.7.7–8, 30.2.7; *De Mens. et Pond.* 15). Epiphanius also tells of the return of some of the Pella refugees and the continuation of the Jerusalem church (*De Mens. et Pond* 15).

Taken as a whole, the evidence for Jewish Christianity in the area of Bashan in the Transjordan is noteworthy. The excavation and recognition of Jewish Christian inscriptions at four different villages by different archeologists working across the span of a century provides multiple, independent attestation. It is also significant that these findings form no part of the quest to show the continuity of holy sites. The coherence of this material evidence with two lines of literary traditions is noteworthy, and there is a strong degree of historical plausibility to the claim that Epiphanius knows of Jewish Christians in this region.

This material evidence points to the presence of Jewish Christians in the Transjordan as late as the fourth and fifth centuries. These findings neither prove nor exclude the possibility of an earlier presence. Consequently, the Jewish Christian inscriptions of the Transjordan represent the most significant material evidence for the presence of Jewish Christianity.

Summation

The search for archeological evidence for Jewish Christianity has generated more heat than light. Joan Taylor has convincingly demonstrated that the Bagatti-Testa hypothesis is not sustained by the evidence. Indeed, no type of Christianity seems to have left significant material traces of its formative years, and this is particularly true of groups that were eventually marginalized.

The evidence in the Transjordan seems to provide the one clear instance of material evidence for Jewish Christianity, and this coheres with what is known from the literary evidence. If there is any

plausible material evidence of Jewish Christianity at its earlier stages, it is meager: a floor beneath the house of Peter, the foundational pavement of a Capernaum synagogue, the lowest strata of the Church of the Apostles. While the Transjordan inscriptions present strong evidence for the later stages of Jewish Christianity, at present there is no extant archeological data that adds intrinsically to our understanding of the formative years of Jewish Christianity.

Conclusion

Scholarly attention was given to Jewish Christianity as a part of the Enlightenment and the Deists' quest for the religion of Jesus. Critical analysis makes it clear that the historical profile of Jesus as a Jewish prophet of the Kingdom stands in continuity with the Jewish character of the earliest communities of his followers and the texts they produced. The patristic representation of Jewish Christianity, when sifted with critical care, testifies to the continued existence of such groups. Various texts assigned to Jewish Christians signify the continued vitality of these movements, as do the scattered responses to Jesus in rabbinic tradition. A few scattered pieces of material culture may also testify to the continuation of Jewish Christianity.

Are there genetic relationships between these various historical markers? If so, to what degree is a synthesis possible? Is it reasonable to speak of Jewish Christianity as a coherent religious and social movement?

Plausible coherence and continuities within Jewish Christianity

The evidence for Jewish Christianity is limited, scattered, obscured, and suppressed. It is difficult to provide a comprehensive description of any single group, and no synthesis of the larger movement is possible. One may speak, however, of apparent connections in terms of influence, theology, and location. Consequently, a plausible description of a few clusters or lines of influence may be offered. The concept of a *matrix* is used to describe a cluster of traditions in a particular locale; the concept of a *trajectory* is used to describe the extension of a tradition into other locations.

A Galilean matrix

The expectation for a continued movement in the Galilee is apparent in the synoptic gospels, but evidence for this proves elusive. If there was a continuing Galilean movement, it likely clustered around three poles.

The tradents of the Sayings Tradition appear to operate initially in the villages of the Galilee. The Gospel of Matthew and the *Didache* suggest some parts of this tradition are being absorbed into the wider flow of Christianity.

The family of Jesus may provide a second center for Galilean Christianity. Julius Africanus says that relatives of Jesus used Nazareth and Kochaba as bases for their missionary activity, which apparently involved a salvation history based on a theological interpretation of the Davidic genealogy. When the grandsons of Jude are arrested under Domitian, they claim to own and work a farm, presumably in the Galilee.

The third focal point of Galilean Christianity may be found in the figure of Peter. He is recognized in Jerusalem as a Galilean (Mark 14:70; Matt. 26:69–75; Luke 22:59), and the shadow of Peter seems to fall across several lines of tradition. Peter alone is named in the command to go to the Galilee to see the risen Jesus (Mark 16:7), and Luke makes him the first male disciple at the tomb of Jesus (24:12). For Luke, Peter the Galilean is the leader of the Jerusalem community. Most significantly for Luke, the first clear mission to the Gentiles begins with the work of Peter (Acts 10:1–48). Peter also plays a key role in John 21. The Jewishness of Galilean Christianity is probably confirmed by a few rabbinical stories where followers of Jesus are treated as *minim* and where the rabbis show particular concern for heresy in the Galilee.

A Jerusalem matrix

The Jerusalem community was composed of Jewish Christians, and it provided the center for most forms of Christianity up to the first Jewish War (66–74 CE). Luke treats the Jerusalem community as an idealized form of Judaism and understands it as the first stage of the mission to the Gentiles. Even when his focus turns to Paul, the story continues to pass through Jerusalem. Central to this phase is the leadership of James, the brother of Jesus.

A plausible case can be made that the Jerusalem community continued after the war under Jewish Christian leaders, primarily from the family of Jesus, and that it continued to play a central role in the larger world of Christianity. This appears to change with the failure of the second Jewish revolt (132–135 CE), when Jews are forbidden to enter Jerusalem.

TRAJECTORIES FROM JERUSALEM OR PALESTINE

The Jerusalem community exerted its impact as a cluster of Jewish Christianity, but it also spread its influence along several trajectories. Luke records in Acts the expansion of Christianity in the tracks of a variety of Jerusalem missionaries.

Three specific trajectories are suggested by the development of Jewish Christian communities at Antioch, at Alexandria, and at Rome. Luke shows Antioch as a development from the Jerusalem community, and he traces continued correspondence and visits between the two communities (Acts 11:27–30). Paul says that the 'brothers of the Lord' (1 Cor. 9:5) are traveling missionaries, and some missionaries of this type likely create a Palestinian trajectory to Rome. A similar development seems to be at work in Alexandria. The figure of Barnabas is associated with Alexandria, as is the name of the evangelist Mark. The Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of John are known there by the second century. The first Christian known from Alexandria is Apollos, a Jewish follower of Jesus who combines rhetorical eloquence with exegetical skill. Thus, Alexandria also appears to lie along a trajectory that leads back to Palestine and Jerusalem.

A fifth trajectory connects Jerusalem to the Transjordan. Eusebius says the Jerusalem community fled in the face of the first Jewish revolt to Pella in the Transjordan (*HE* 3.5.3), a tradition echoed by Epiphanius (*De Mens. et pond.* 15). Both suggest the community returned to Jerusalem after the revolt (*HE* 4.5.1; *De Mens. et pond.* 15). Epiphanus subsequently locates both Nazarenes and Ebionites in the Transjordan (*Pan.* 29.7.7, 30.2.7). Archeological evidence supports the existence of Jewish Christians in the Transjordan in the fourth century, though the material may be earlier.

An Antiochene matrix

The second major center for Jewish Christianity was Antioch. The evidence for Jewish Christianity in and around Syrian Antioch implies connection and continuity (Broadhead 2010: 384–86). Luke presents Antioch as a vital center of Jewish Christianity in the period between the death of Jesus and the mid 60s CE. The Gospel of Matthew, likely from Antioch in the 80s or 90s, engages Jewish Christian traditions in its debate with local synagogues. The *Didache* and the prophets of the Sayings Tradition appear to have a home here. Early in the second century, Ignatius is using the Gospel of Matthew at Antioch, and he warns against the dangers of 'Judaizing.' In the mid third century, Syrian followers of Jesus who speak Aramaic are known in Persia as Nazarenes. In the late fourth century, Jerome and Epiphanius know of Jewish Christians from Syria who practice a Hebraic tradition of scriptural interpretation, including a Hebrew version of the Gospel of Matthew. Consequently, Antioch and its surrounding areas provide a primary location for Jewish Christianity on the religious map of antiquity.

TRAJECTORIES FROM ANTIOCH

Luke presents the Antioch community as the base for a number of itinerant missions. Barnabas and Saul are sent to preach in the synagogues of Seleucia, Cyprus, Pamphilia, Iconium, and other locations (Acts 13:1–5). Judas and Silas are sent from Antioch back to their own communities (Acts 15:32–35). Paul and Silas go from Antioch through Syria and Cilicia, while Barnabas and John Mark go to Cyprus (Acts 15:36–41). Paul's third missionary journey begins from Antioch (Acts 18:22–23). All of these missions are directed first to the synagogues. Luke shows the turn to the Gentiles as a move caused by rejection and exasperation (Acts 13:46–47; 18:6; 28:25–28).

When the Persians conquer Antioch and Aleppo (Syrian Beroea) in the period from 255–260 CE, they deport large numbers to various cities in Persia (Broadhead 2010: 181–4). These deportees maintain among themselves a distinction already present in Syria: Greek-speaking followers of Jesus are called Christians, while followers of Jesus who speak Aramaic are called Nazarenes. Although this may represent only a linguistic description, it does cohere with patristic information.

While the *composition* of the Gospel of Matthew likely reveals a Jewish Christian cluster at Antioch, its *transmission* may be understood as a trajectory from Antioch. The Gospel of Matthew is taken up into the larger canon and becomes the favored gospel in most Christian communities.

The Gospel of Matthew may also be traced along another trajectory. Whether Hebrew Matthew is an original production or a translation, it is transmitted along its own trajectory into the center of Jewish Christianity. The concept of a Hebrew Matthew has an extraordinary, much-debated history that continues in the medieval period (Howard 1995; Ochs 2013). This makes it likely, from a historical perspective, that the Gospel of Matthew emerged from Antioch along two distinct trajectories.

A Transjordan matrix

There is a noteworthy sequence of Jewish Christian associations with the Transjordan. These include the flight to Pella tradition from the first century, the patristic description of Nazarenes and Ebionites from the fourth century, and the archeological data from the fourth or fifth century.

The synagogues as a matrix for Jewish Christianity

A different type of cluster may be found in the relation of Jewish Christianity to synagogues in various locales. The Gospel of Matthew seems to sponsor debate among Jewish followers of Jesus with varying relations to local synagogues. Luke portrays the early Christian missionaries, especially Paul, as working primarily in connection with Jewish synagogues. Archeological and sociological studies suggest that Christianity emerged in Rome and Alexandria in the same places, ways, and forms as the Jewish synagogues. In Antioch, Rome, and Alexandria, the imprint of the synagogue on Christian worship and interpretation is evident. It is clear that in a number of important sites Jesus movements grew up within the synagogues and continued for some time to express traits of Jewish identity.

'The parting of the ways' and the history of primitive Christianity

The history of scholarship in relation to Jewish Christianity has been framed, for the most part, under the dominant paradigm of an early and decisive separation of church and synagogue and the triumph of Gentile Christianity. This model has been challenged in a wide range of recent scholarship (Broadhead 2010: 354–74, 389–91).

Historical markers suggest that the Galilee, Jerusalem, Antioch, the Transjordan, and some Jewish synagogues each provided a matrix for Jewish Christianity. In addition, the growth of Jewish Christianity may be traced along trajectories leading from Palestine and from Syrian Antioch. In light

of this analysis, the early and decisive parting of the ways described by several generations of scholars is untenable; it appears to be mostly a literary pronouncement, and it is primarily the work of bishops and rabbis.

The process of ebb and flow observed in the first four centuries of the common era is more accurately described as a *forming of the ways*. Jewish ways of following Jesus were foundational, and only later were such groups described as heretical. It has become increasingly clear that Jewish Christianity did not emerge as a hybrid of rabbinic Judaism and Christian orthodoxy; it participated in the formative stages of both. By the close of the fourth century, Jewish Christianity has been officially excluded from both groups, but some evidence may testify to its continued presence and influence.

These findings require a rethinking of how Christianity developed, both in its social and its theological dimensions. The story of primitive Christianity is usually traced as a series of transitions and triumphs: from Jerusalem to Rome; from James to Paul; from Hebrews to Hellenists; from law to grace; from nationalism to universalism; from Judaism to Christianity. The analysis of various lines of evidence for Jewish Christianity in the first four centuries and the reconstruction based on that analysis suggest a very different understanding of the landscape and of the dynamics at work within the religious environment of antiquity.

Notes

1 For a full discussion on the history of research, see Broadhead (2010), especially pp. 6–27.
2 For extensive bibliography on the question of definition, see especially Carleton Paget, 1999: 733, n. 7.
3 There is a growing awareness that the ethnic connotations of *Ioudaioi* may take precedence over religious elements implied by the term in the first century CE. Consequently, there is a debate over whether the term is best translated Judean (as by Philip Esler and Douglas Oakman in this volume) or 'Jew.' In this essay I will continue to use the words 'Jew' and 'Jewish' in relation to the people in view.
4 From a historical perspective, Ebion is likely fictional, though Ebionites are real; Symmachians are likely a constructed image, though Symmachus is real.
5 Pseudo-Tertullian (*adv. omn. haer.* 3); Pseudo-Hieronymus (*indic. de haer.* 10); Epiphanius (*Pan.* 28.5.1–2 of Cerinthians; *Pan.* 30.26.2 and 30.33.4 of Ebionites). The claim to imitate Jesus is sometimes noted without mention of Mt 10.24–25.
6 For reconstruction, discussion, and bibliography, see Broadhead 2010: 254–83.
7 For analysis and bibliography, see Broadhead 2010: 277–8.
8 Isa. 8:11–15, 8:19–22, 9:1, 11:1–3, 29:17–21, 31:6–9.
9 Their work was presented in a series of publications, but is summarized in Bellarmino and Bagatti 1971. A detailed summary is found in the extensive refutation by Joan Taylor 1993. See the discussion in Broadhead, 2010: 301–51.
10 Since Christianity had no official sanction, Jewish Christianity provided a necessary component for their theory of continuity.
11 The initial work for *Christians and the Holy Places* served as the basis for Taylor's 1989 University of Edinburgh doctoral dissertation.
12 See the discussion and bibliography in Broadhead 2010: 334–42.
13 The description is given by Corbo 1975: 59–74. I am dependent on the description, photographs, charts, and drawings provided by Taylor 1993: 268–88.
14 See Corbo 1975: 97–8. Corbo cites the rabbinic stories of *minim* at Capernaum. This is discussed in Taylor 1993: 24–31.
15 See Bagatti 1971: 117–18. Pixner's argument may be found in Pixner 1990: 16–35, 60. Pinkerfeld's argument is found in Pixner 1990, Taylor 1993, and Broadhead 2010.
16 Pixner cites the Constantinian orientation of the Martyrion toward the tomb of Jesus. Pixner also cites the conclusion of Bagatti that the church in front of Mary's tomb, considered by Bagatti to be Jewish Christian, is oriented toward the tomb of Jesus.
17 The language of Theodoret, *Hist. Eccls.* 5.9.17.
18 Epiphanius in *De Mens. et Pond.* 14.
19 James 2.2; Epiphanius (*Pan.* 30.18.12).
20 Epiphanius gives this description in the *Panarion* (29.7.7; see also 30.2.8–9).

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7

FROM THE HELLENISTS TO MARCION

Early gentile Christianity

Todd Klutz

At the beginning of the second century, Ignatius, bishop of the church of Antioch, was travelling through Asia Minor to Rome, where his zeal to die for the sake of Christ was soon to be satisfied. Prior to his arrival in the capitol, however, he composed several letters, seven of which survive (see Chapter 27 of this volume), and one of which – his Epistle to the Magnesians – preserves a fascinating image of the relations that obtained at this time between Christians and Jews.

After stressing that his Christian audience should be united in obedience to their bishop and elders (*Magn.* 3.1–7.2), Ignatius shifts to a related issue that sheds light on why he considered the authority of the church's leadership to be so important in that context; namely, he was aware of the existence of certain Christians who were so attracted to Jewish customs that they were conducting themselves not according to 'the new leaven' of Jesus Christ, but rather according to the 'bad leaven' of Judaism, which in Ignatius's view had 'grown stale and sour' (*Magn.* 8.1–10.3). As Ignatius furthermore implies that his judgement on this matter was shared by the Magnesians' bishop, his emphatic approval of that bishop's authority at another point in the letter (*Magn.* 2.1–3.2) appears to have been motivated, at least partly, by a desire to discourage Christian adoption of Jewish practices.

In order to achieve this aim, Ignatius not only enjoins the Magnesians to submit to the bishop, but also explicitly evaluates Christian adoption of Jewish practices in a negative manner: 'It is absurd', he says, 'to talk of Jesus Christ and to practise Judaism'. Immediately thereafter he attempts to defend this stance by means of an abstract theological ideology of the historical relationship between Judaism and Christianity: 'For Christianity did not believe in Judaism', he reasons, 'but Judaism in Christianity, in which every tongue that has believed in God has been gathered together' (trans. mine, *Magn.* 10.3). While many features of this passage invite comment, a couple of observations on it are particularly relevant to the larger story below. First of all, the passage's vocabulary, and in particular the distinction it presupposes between 'Judaism' and 'Christianity', encodes a larger cultural system of assumptions and values in which Christianity is no longer conceptualised (as it is for example in Acts 18:12–15 and 25:19) as a phenomenon within Judaism, but rather outside and very different from it (Jefford 2006: 167–68). To be sure, Ignatius' assumption on this matter should not be taken as representative of all Christian opinion in his milieu; but neither should it be construed as idiosyncratic, for his authority as bishop of one of the Christian movement's earliest centres of missionary endeavour both reflected and reinforced his power to attract followers and influence their perspectives (Jefford 2006: 168).

Second, and on the other hand, because the aforementioned return by some Christians to the church's Jewish roots is no minor concern in the Magnesians' letter, but rather is one of that text's

Figure 7.1 Major places and cities associated with the spread of the Christ-movement among gentiles in the first century CE

most salient themes, the implied author of that document is best understood as someone who realised his own point of view on the issue was not shared by all of his Christian contemporaries, and that at least an important part of his audience in the Magnesian church was familiar with the phenomenon challenged by his letter. Thus, as is amply attested in a variety of other ancient sources, neither in public perception nor in religious practice were 'Christianity' and 'Judaism' unanimously distinguished from one another at the beginning of the second century CE, notwithstanding the rhetorical aims of the bishop of Antioch.

Still, for a figure such as Ignatius merely to presuppose the kinds of theological distinctions noted above, significant steps must already have been trodden down that dendriform path whereby the imprecisely labelled entity 'Christianity' became increasingly perceived and experienced as distinct from what for centuries has been called, with arguably greater violence to the details, 'Judaism'. Those steps – the most important situations, rhetorical moments, and developments that led to the sorts of ambiguities just inferred from Ignatius – are the main focus of the present narrative; and in the process of explaining those same developments below, I will assume that a proper account of them necessitates discussion of the process whereby faith in a Jew, Jesus of Nazareth, as God's agent of salvation became an increasingly non-Jewish phenomenon. The ensuing story thus begins with Judean Christ-followers in Jerusalem in the days immediately after the death of Jesus and ends with controversies sparked outside Palestine by the second-century gentile Christian theologian, Marcion of Sinope (*c.* 85–160 CE), strongly renounced as a heretic in the deviance-labelling rhetoric of his Christian critics (see, e.g. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.27.2–4), but nonetheless highly influential in spreading among the gentiles an anti-Judaic adaptation of the apostle Paul's teachings.

The first mission to gentiles

Saul of Tarsus (*c.* 4 BCE–*c.* 62 CE), known chiefly by his Roman name, Paul, to subsequent generations of Christians, formulated opinions that powerfully influenced later Christian writers as diverse as Ignatius of Antioch (Koester 1982: 281–284), the anonymous author of the Nag Hammadi tractate known as the *Gospel of Philip*, and Augustine of Hippo. Indeed, because Paul's letters have been so influential in the history of Christianity that he might properly be regarded as the strong poet of early Christian theology, he continues to seduce many exegetes and historians into treating him in a fashion reminiscent of the now widely discredited great-man theory of history, according to which the landscape of the past is heavily coloured by the thoughts and deeds of a few extraordinary individuals (Carr 1987: 53–55).

Against any great-man interpretation of Paul, however, and notwithstanding his undeniable influence on the beliefs and practices of subsequent generations of Christians down to the present, the apostle's theology and missionary praxis can be adequately understood only within a framework of assumptions derived from his ancient Mediterranean cultural environment (see Chapter 1 of this work). For the purposes of the present narrative, it is important to realise that Paul almost certainly was not the first Jewish believer in Jesus to proclaim the gospel of Christ to non-Jews. Instead, Paul's practice and theology of mission are best understood as having been moulded in good measure by a group of Greek-speaking Jewish 'Christ-followers' who were the first to include gentiles as equal members in their redemptive communities. On the basis of a story found in Acts 6:1–6, this group is often referred to as the 'Hellenists'; and in order to understand either the development of gentile Christianity or the role of Paul in that process, attention needs to be given to what can be known about these Hellenists, to some of the problems they pose for the historian, and to recent scholarship and methodological developments pertinent to a critical understanding of this group.

Hellenists and Hebrews

In general, most modern interpreters of the key reference to the Hellenists in Acts 6:1 have tended to view it as part of a larger section of narrative (Acts 6:1–8:4) that includes at least partially reliable

traditions about a distinct group of Greek-speaking Jewish (and possibly gentile – Esler 1987: 148–61) Christ-followers, some of whom, in response to intense conflicts with the Aramaic-speaking (and supposedly more traditional) apostles in the church of Jerusalem, departed from Judea and initiated a movement that offered salvation to gentiles through faith in Jesus, without requiring them to observe the ritual laws of Judaism (Conzelmann 1973: 58–59). According to this view, these so-called Hellenists undertook a Torah-free mission to the gentiles within a year or so of the crucifixion of Jesus (*c.* 33 CE), and thus prior to Paul's conversion. But just as importantly, the same perspective understands the Hellenists to have been both the primary target of Paul's pre-conversion activities as a persecutor and, through the efforts of their own distinctive community in Damascus, the main agents of his post-conversion resocialisation into the ethnically mixed subculture of Jesus' worshippers; accordingly, the Hellenists are viewed from that same standpoint as a major influence on the conceptual reconfiguration that attended Paul's conversion and developed into the ideology of universal mission expressed in his letters (cf. Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 10:32; Gal. 3:27–29).

In recent years, however, a small but growing contingent of scholars has arisen which judges these conclusions to be inadequately nuanced and the methods used to reach them as misleading. More specifically, due in some instances to doubts about the capacity of biblical criticism to uncover early and reliable traditions in the narratives that mention the Hellenists, but in others to scepticism about the referential value of the Acts narrative as a whole (Penner 2004: 41–44), several recent publications in the field of Christian origins have chosen simply to avoid the term 'Hellenists' altogether. They have either replaced it with phrases such as 'the Christ cult' to refer to a slightly different but comparable phenomenon (e.g. Mack 1995: 75–96), or urged that what really needs to be revised is the suspiciously tidy denotatum of 'liberal' or 'radical' Jewish Christians which scholars have so often attached to the word 'Hellenist' in Acts 6:1 (Hill 1992: 193–96). From the latter perspective, moreover, developed in detail by Craig Hill in his *Hebrews and Hellenists: Reappraising Division within the Earliest Church*, a worthwhile advance could be made by modifying our inherited image of the Hellenists in Acts 6:1–8:4 as uniformly liberal or radical, and associating the category with a more variegated range of social referents and values.

Some of Hill's most important conclusions rely heavily on an earlier monograph (1978) written by Earl Richard concerning the main narrative in which the Hellenists are treated, namely Acts 6:1–8:4. On the basis of painstaking literary analysis of this section and the material surrounding it, Richard's study demonstrates that the types of linguistic features which permeate the speech attributed in Acts 7:2b–53 to the Hellenist Stephen are the same as those that dominate the surrounding narratives in 6:1–7, 6:8–7:2a and 7:54–8:4 (Richard 1978: 229–42). By thus undermining the widespread assumption that this section of Acts can be confidently divided on stylistic grounds into pre-Lukan units of earlier tradition on the one hand and Luke's own narrative additions and theological rhetoric on the other, Richard's study has drawn attention to the methodological limitations of traditional varieties of biblical criticism to produce sure insights into the identity and character of the Hellenists.

However, by using Richard's conclusions to argue that Acts 6:1–8:4 yields virtually no reliable knowledge about Stephen or the Hellenists as a whole (Hill 1992: 101), Hill appears to have quit the enterprise of historicisation too quickly. First of all, he fails to observe that although a high degree of literary and stylistic cohesion does indeed unite the narrative framework of this section and the speech material embedded in it, the Lukan characterisation of the Hellenists as a group, and of Stephen and Philip as exemplary Hellenists in particular, significantly deviates in ideational substance from some of the most prominent themes of Luke-Acts, about which more will be said below. And second, while Hill is correct to highlight the limitations of biblical source criticism, he surprisingly shows no theoretical interest in any of the historicist varieties of contemporary literary criticism which, had he utilised any of them, could have substantially enriched his own historical inquiry.[1] One critical resource capable of producing refinements at both of those points is the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) sociological poetics, amply illustrated in his renowned *The Dialogic Imagination*.

From the standpoint of the Bakhtinian concept of 'dialogism', which in general would see Acts 6:1–8:4 as an instantiation of struggles between sociocultural energies that promote heterogeneity and those that foster unity (Bakhtin 1981: xviii), the coherence and literary cohesion that obstruct source-critical efforts to identify pre-Lukan traditions in this section are best interpreted as an instantiation of the Graeco-Roman political assumption that any human institution perceived to be disunited will suffer dishonour and loss of status (Welborn 1997: 1–8).[2] From that same perspective, moreover, the aesthetic phenomenon of literary unity in Acts 6:1–8:4, as in Luke-Acts as a whole, is indicative of an attempt to represent the earliest Christians as socially unified, even though the ideological nature of that attempt is partially exposed by the acknowledgement of discord in Acts 6:1.

At the same time, though, and from the same Bakhtinian point of view, whatever theoretical shortcomings may have weakened the attempts by modern historians to uncover pre-Lukan traditions about the Hellenists, scholars such as Martin Hengel and Étienne Trocmé have not been obtuse in thinking that alongside Luke's centripetal fiction of Christian harmony and unity are hints of an antithetical force – a sense of centrifugality and conflict – in the Lukan depiction of the Hellenists (Trocmé 1997: 21–22). Only what these interpreters were sensing was not, as they themselves believed, evidence of a pre-Lukan literary source; rather, it was evidence that a thoroughly Hellenised group of Greek-speaking Jewish members of the Christ cult had made such a memorable impression on other participants in the original context of reference that complete homogenisation of the Hellenists' distinctives was considered by Luke to be blatantly unreliable and thus rhetorically inexpedient. Thus, although Acts 6:1–8:4 tells us only a tiny fraction of what we might want to know about the early years of the Jerusalem church, it almost certainly gives us better information about a single formative and widely remembered instance of heteroglossia and social conflict in that setting than it does about the history of primitive Christian theological development.

Diversity and conflict in the Jerusalem church

On the foundation of this dialogic reading of the Acts narratives, we might wish to press our inquiry farther by asking what else can be responsibly conjectured about the Hellenists, or at least about how they may have been perceived and evaluated in their own social environment by persons other than the author of Acts. To begin, in view of Luke's conspicuous need to portray the earliest believers (and especially their leaders) as members of a unified and harmonious movement within Judaism (cf. Acts 11:1–18, 15:1–35), any images in his narratives that even feebly suggest otherwise can be evaluated as signs of a diversity which, though Luke was able to downplay or partially tame it, was too powerful, diffuse and familiar to be omitted entirely from his account. For instance, just as Luke puts into the background of his story the conflict which rhetorical credibility requires him to acknowledge in Acts 15:1–35 (cf. Gal. 2:1–10), so in his terse acknowledgement of the Hellenists' complaint against the Hebrews (Acts 6:1–6) he is undoubtedly downplaying still another momentous conflict which, though a detached account of its agonistic fireworks would have contravened his larger rhetorical goals, the effective mechanisms of gossip networks compelled him to admit. More specifically, since Luke's heavy emphasis on intra-Christian solidarity is scarcely served by his inclusion of such a complaint, the most fruitful questions we can bring to this text do not involve whether some kind of dispute like this actually occurred (undoubtedly it did) but rather why the occasion of the actual complaint – the Hellenists' widows had been neglected by the Hebrews in the distribution of poverty relief – had arisen in the first place.[3]

As for why the widows among the Hellenists had been neglected, the narrator of Acts 6:1–6 tells us almost nothing. While his brevity could of course have been due to a lack of information, it just as easily could have been due to an entirely understandable desire to minimise as many of this conflict's shameful features as possible. A cluster of clues supporting the latter option is found in the terminology used to denote the disputants, that is 'the Hellenists' and 'the Hebrews'. As implied above but widely overlooked, the occurrence of the Greek article ('the') with the noun 'Hellenists'

conveys what grammarians call a 'well-known' nuance, implying that the construction as a whole denotes an entity with which the implied reader/hearer is assumed to be familiar; this interpretation is reinforced by the absence of any explanatory aside which, had it been present, would have suggested among other things that the audience was unfamiliar with this group. The Greek noun translated into English as 'Hellenists', moreover, is widely agreed to indicate the linguistic habits (i.e. Greek) of those so denoted (Penner 2004: 68–71), though debate continues concerning whether the implied language habits also entail distinct modes of thought and culture (Barrett 1994: 308). This latter question, however, is of no small importance, since the way it is resolved bears vitally on the present question.

Once this point in the inquiry is reached, what historical scholarship normally does is either highlight the undeniable prominence of language in cultural systems in general, the conclusion therefore being that the Hebrews and Hellenists differed significantly both in linguistic practice and in cultural and theological tendency (Esler 1987: 135–63), or stress the cultural heterogeneity that can be found within every distinct language grouping, the point being that the wide diversity within each distinct system – whether linguistically or culturally defined – stoutly defies valid generalisation (Hill 1996: 131, 152–53). On different levels of abstraction, both schools offer valid perspectives; but unfortunately, they both miss the point. For both of them ignore what surely needs to be recognised as a fundamentally important distinction in discussions of the present topic, namely, the difference between an etic, observer-orientated historiography and an emic, participant-orientated ethnography. The former mode of analysis can scarcely contribute more than it already has to this discussion, whereas experimentation with the latter may have something to offer the present inquiry.

In brief, as soon as we ask the emic question of how two linguistically distinct groups, one of which preferred to speak Aramaic and the other probably being limited to Greek, would have viewed one another in the tense atmosphere of Jerusalem around 33–34 CE, some useful answers offer themselves to us for consideration. Most significantly, in view of the tendency of people in the ancient Mediterranean world to stereotype each other on the basis of group affiliation (Esler 1998: 55–57; Malina 2001: 60–67), it seems very likely that a group of Aramaic speakers in this context would have been powerfully predisposed to formulate negative generalisations about another group that spoke only Greek, despite the high volume of cultural tradition the two may have shared, regardless of the now widely acknowledged Hellenisation of all Palestina, and notwithstanding the unconscious internalisation of Hellenistic ideas and values by the 'Hebrews' themselves.[4] In other words, the conflict whose long-remembered effects compelled Luke to acknowledge in Acts 6:1 what he surely would have omitted if he could, illustrates a widely attested social-scientific maxim: what may seem to an outgroup observer to be a minor difference between people who are deeply alike, can often be perceived by the in-group participants as a tremendously important disagreement, which can lead the disputants into heated arguments, hard feelings and division into factions that define themselves at least partly in terms of their mutual antagonism (Pruitt and Rubin 1986: 7–8).

The dispute regarding the widows, then, was probably only a minor symptom of a far deeper ailment that had been worsening for some time. For instance, if, as seems virtually certain, the Hellenists consisted chiefly of Jews from the diaspora who had accepted the apostles' preaching at or around the Feast of Pentecost (Martin 1992: 135–36), they can easily be imagined to have fallen quickly into conflict with the apostles over any of a number of issues: having probably belonged to that stratum of Jews who had assimilated to the dominant gentile culture of the relatively populous cities of the Greek east in order to enhance their status and economic prospects, the Hellenists may well have found it difficult to grant the honour and authority claims made by the relatively agrarian, traditional, 'Hebrew' apostles who had introduced them to Jesus. Another possible underlying cause for the dispute mentioned in Acts 6:1, suggested by Esler (1987: 159–61), is the inclusion of gentiles at a very early stage into Hellenist circles and the tensions this could have caused with the 'Hebrews' precisely in regard to meals and table fellowship as represented in the text. In view of

these differences in culture and socioeconomic background, the dispute over the widows must have been only one of a number of intra-group squabbles experienced by this heterogeneous community.

Consequently, whatever credit Luke might deserve for his preservation of this snippet of primitive Christian heteroglossia, his account of the resolution of this conflict should be interpreted as exemplifying the same ideological tendency displayed so clearly in his subsequent narratives about Paul (Acts 21:17–26). To be more precise, his depiction of the outcome of the tension as an amicable arrangement, with seven of the Hellenists being selected to minister under the apostles to the previously neglected widows (Acts 6:2–6), is best understood as a rhetorically positive redescription of an ending that in reality had damaged the new movement's already vulnerable reputation. And, in the ensuing narratives, his emphatic portrayal of the more violent hostilities towards the Hellenists as originating not from within the Jerusalem church, but rather from a coalition of unbelieving Jewish outsiders (Acts 6:11–14), is probably intended at least partly to divert attention away from the same internal discord and its damaging resolution.

Stephen in a context of challenge and riposte

The content of the accusations levelled by the Jewish outsiders against the Hellenist Stephen (Acts 6:11–14) offers further insight into that same conflict and its implications. In brief, the accusations, which the narrator of Acts not surprisingly attributes to 'false witnesses' (6:13), are that Stephen had been speaking profusely against both the Jerusalem temple and the law of Moses. While Luke cannot be expected to have preserved the original charge precisely as it had been given, he is most unlikely to have invented this sort of accusation, not only because the manufacture of fictitious criticism would have been rhetorically counterproductive but also because the accusations have no counterpart, or macro-structural parallel, in the Lukan stories about Peter and the other apostles. In fact, since the only parallels to this charge within Acts are criticisms levelled against Paul (Acts 21:27–28, 18:13, 25:8), and since Luke's conspicuous effort throughout much of Acts to counteract antagonism to Paul is not helped in the least by a parallel of this kind with Stephen (unlike one with Peter or Jesus), the accusations summarised in 6:13 are almost certainly indicative of real charges brought against Stephen and his Hellenist associates. But most importantly, although the speech presented in Acts 7 as Stephen's response to these criticisms shows every sign of being Luke's own composition, it also displays the same sort of ideological polyphony discussed above in connection with the dispute over poverty relief: most notably, while Luke scarcely conceals his desire to portray Stephen as innocent of the charges brought against him (Acts 6:13),[5] he almost simultaneously cites Stephen as uttering ideas that actually confirm the outsiders' criticisms (7:44–50).

Stephen's criticism of the temple would undoubtedly have been understood by his opponents as entailing antagonism to a larger set of attitudes held by the pious regarding purity, which of course played a vital role in maintaining Jewish identity vis-à-vis gentile culture (Harrington 1993: 36–37). Thus, when Luke subsequently portrays the Hellenists as preaching not only to Jews but also to gentiles (Acts 11:19–21), he stands clearly within the boundaries of cultural and historical plausibility. To say this, of course, is not to say that this section of Acts is entirely accurate on details or matters of sequencing: both the substantial amount of attention devoted to Peter's evangelisation of the gentile Cornelius (Acts 10:1–11:18), for instance, and the positioning of that story just ahead of Luke's first and only reference to a large scale outreach to gentiles by the Hellenists (Acts 11:19–26), have less to do with the order and proportion of historical events than with Luke's need to associate the controversial inclusion of the gentiles with the accepted authority of Peter, rather than with the questionable status of the Hellenists. For even if the story about Peter and Cornelius contains reliable tradition about the founding of a church in Caesarea that included gentiles, the prominent role played by the Hellenists in the geographical and ethnic extension of the new message could only have exacerbated the reputational problems which already confronted the church in the eyes of many of its Jewish neighbours.

Figure 7.2 Silver tetradrachm of the emperor Nero (54–68 CE); minted *c.* 61/62 in Syrian Antioch, where only a few decades earlier Christ-followers were first called 'Christians' (Acts 11:26). Photo credit Yale University Art Collection, and reproduced by their permission

Therefore, Luke's emphatic attempt to associate the first mission of the Christ cult to gentiles not only with the Hebrew part of the movement but also with the recognised authority of Peter and the full approval of Heaven (Acts 10:1–11:18), was a response to earlier stories that acknowledged the leading role played by the Hellenists in that first outreach. The assumed outreach by the Hellenists, moreover, can be usefully redescribed – in terms borrowed from the social psychology of interpersonal conflict – as a phase of 'escalation' in the same multi-phase game of challenge and response. At an earlier stage, this game had expressed itself in less weighty disputes such as the distribution issue. Since the conflict over aid had undoubtedly not been resolved as ideally as Acts 6:2–6 suggests, the residual inequities would have been interpreted by the Hellenists as an affront to their honour. They therefore would have been likely to increase the number and importance of the issues in the dispute (e.g. from the distribution of aid, to the sanctity of the temple and rules for admission into the group); and from there the deterioration of the relationship between the two parties could easily have led to violence (Acts 7:58–8:3), involvement of people originally outside the conflict (Acts 6:9–15, 8:4–40, 11:20–22) and separation (Acts 8:1b).[6]

One singularly important consequence of this conflict is that, if not prior to the separation phase (although that is possible), then certainly afterwards, it facilitated a missionary campaign by the Hellenists that resulted in the conversion of a number of uncircumcised gentiles, and thus in the establishment of several communities outside Judea that included both Jews and uncircumcised gentiles among its members. By relaxing the demands of Jewish ritual observance and fully incorporating gentiles without requiring them to become Jews, these communities would have been an offence to the ethnic sensibilities of any pious, Torah-observant Jew. One Jew, in fact, was so offended by the existence of these groups that he zealously devoted himself to stirring up as much trouble for them as he could.

Paul: persecutor, convert and missionary[7]

According to the author of Acts, Saul the Pharisee was present in Jerusalem to play a supporting role in the stoning of the Hellenist Stephen (Acts 7:58, 8:1). While some interpreters have judged

Luke unreliable on this point since Paul himself seems to imply that even after his conversion he was unknown to the churches of Judea (Gal. 1:22; so Knox 1989: 21–23; cf. Hill 1992: 29, n. 41), this judgement is based on a misunderstanding of the force of the periphrastic imperfect in Gal. 1:22 (Esler 1998: 250, n.9) and ignores the tacit correspondence between the account in Acts and Gal. 1:23, where Paul implies that these same churches of Judea did in fact know him as a result of his pre-conversion opposition to them. It therefore seems likely that the zeal which led Paul the Pharisee about 135 miles northwest to Damascus, which was now home to a church that would help transform the persecutor into a proponent, had already been expressed earlier in Jerusalem through

Figure 7.3 *The Stoning of Saint Stephen*, etched by Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo (1726–1804). Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program

actions that had contributed to the dispersion of the Hellenists from Jerusalem and thus, ironically, to the establishment of those ethnically mixed churches Paul was now hoping to undermine.

Like the antagonism of other Jewish opponents depicted in Acts 6:8–8:3, the persecuting zeal of Paul in particular (cf. Gal. 1:13; Phil 3:6) was apparently directed not against Jesus' whole community of followers – both 'Hebrews' and 'Hellenists' – but rather solely, or at least primarily, against the Hellenist faction (cf. 7:58–8:1). Paul's bias in this matter, moreover, is no insignificant detail, for a consideration of its implications leads directly to two important conjectures regarding the Hellenists and the nature of their influence on Paul. First of all, by entailing that Paul himself had distinguished between the Hebrews and the Hellenists, this same observation strongly reinforces the position defended above regarding divisions in the Jerusalem church, namely, however extensive the similarities between the Hebrews and the Hellenists may have been in reality, their differences were perceived to be important, not only by the two groups themselves, but by contemporary outsiders as well. And second, since Paul's subsequent career as a Christian missionary and thinker was profoundly shaped by tensions between him and the church of Jerusalem (cf. Rom. 15:30–32; Gal. 2:1–14), the same church, in other words, which the Hellenists had been forced earlier to leave, the resultant similarity between these tensions on the one hand and the Hellenists' earlier conflict with the Hebrews on the other invites us to explore whether the two situations may have been causally interconnected; whether, to be more precise, the reservations of the Jerusalem church about Paul may have stemmed from conspicuous affinities between the missionary-theological practice of Paul and that which the apostles had encountered previously in the Hellenists.[8]

A couple of factors suggest that a causal nexus of this sort is historically feasible to imagine, however vague our reconstruction of it is destined to be. For one thing, in order to be able, as Paul evidently was, not only to distinguish between the Hebrews and Hellenists in the Jerusalem church but also to develop a singularly intense antagonism towards the latter, he must have acquired a considerable body of information about them and their apparently idiosyncratic views. And second, the church in Damascus, which almost certainly was established by the Hellenists (cf. Acts 9:21), managed to escape becoming another victim of Paul's zealous intervention (cf. Acts 9:1–2); instead, and against Paul's original designs, it became the first church in which Paul actually participated as a worshipper of Jesus, the community that resocialised him in the values of the new movement (Acts 9:8–22; Gal. 1:17). At least some ideas and practices of a distinctly Hellenist flavour, therefore, must have been mediated to Paul through the church in Damascus.

However, in the interest of understanding both Paul's subsequent labours as a missionary for Christ and the relationship between this work and his writings, we must not pass over too quickly either his life as a Pharisee (Phil. 3:5) or his conversion. Regarding the former, if we are right in thinking that one of the qualities Paul found especially offensive in the Hellenists was that their inclusion of gentiles as equal members of the redemptive community was facilitated by an abandonment of the usual Jewish requirement of circumcision, then any information his letters might provide concerning this same matter – that is, his pre-conversion ideas about the relationship between Jewish mission to gentiles and the custom of circumcision – could help us towards an understanding of how the various phases and key moments of his life fit together into a meaningful whole. Fortunately, we happen to possess a uniquely valuable piece of such information in the fifth chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians, where he insinuates that at some earlier point in his life he had actually upheld circumcision as a requirement for gentiles wishing to become full members of the covenant community (Gal. 5:11a).

Paul as preacher of circumcision?

Gal. 5:11a contains the following rhetorical question: 'If I am still preaching circumcision, brothers, why am I still being harassed?'[9] In this context Paul is best understood as responding to a claim made to his Galatian audience by his Judaising Christian opponents. The opponents' claim appears to

have been that while Paul himself might not perform circumcision on his gentile initiates, he really does understand and advocate circumcision as an implicit and essential part of his gospel (Donaldson 1997: 282). Paul's question in Gal. 5:11a, therefore, read properly as a rebuttal of this assertion, should be taken to imply that although he did at one time advocate circumcision as a necessity for gentiles who wished to become full members of the people of God, he no longer espoused this view (so also Esler 1998: 74). Furthermore, in light of the pivotal significance that Paul attributes earlier in the same letter to his revelatory experience of conversion (Gal. 1:11–17), the change implied in Gal. 5:11a with regard to Paul's conviction about circumcision is best understood as having coincided with his conversion and call to preach Christ to the nations. And finally, the more immediate communicative effect of this construction should not be overlooked, namely, as far as Paul was concerned, the harassment he was suffering at that time because of his circumcision-free version of the gospel constituted strong evidence that he no longer endorsed his opponents' position.

The rhetorical force of this passage in its Galatian context, however, is relevant to our present purposes only insofar as it enables us to recover Paul's pre-conversion attitudes regarding the interrelated issues of circumcision and gentiles. In brief, by enabling us to infer that he was strongly interested in the connection between these issues before his conversion to Christ, this remarkable piece of discourse implies the existence of a powerful tension in Paul that probably contributed to his eventual conversion. More specifically, since on the one hand the advocacy of circumcision mentioned in Gal. 5:11a entails involvement in a number of culturally related activities, ranging from attracting potential converts among the gentiles and instructing them in Jewish tradition, to arranging the surgical operations that would complete their conversion, Paul's interest in the status of gentiles vis-à-vis the God of Israel and their proper initiation into the covenant community was clearly alive prior to his conversion/call. Similar interest, moreover, is not only well documented from the Judaism of Paul's time (Borgen 1996: 45–59, 68–69), but also is consistent with the universalistic belief shared by Paul and his kin that the God of Israel was the one true God of all creation and thus of all humanity (Boyarin 1994: 39).

On the other hand, as that same letter to the Galatians also implies a stark contrast between Paul's new proclamation of gentile inclusion without circumcision and his former advocacy of circumcision as an entrance requirement, it suggests that sitting very uneasily next to Paul's pre-conversion ideal of a single humanity united under the one true God of creation was a competing particularism that was zealous to preserve Jewish difference, to protect the cultural and racial distinctiveness of Judaism, and to perpetuate all the ancestral traditions and practices that served these ends (e.g. circumcision, dietary restrictions and sabbath observance). While on the whole the distinctiveness of these customs probably served to attract gentile interest in Judaism as much as it did to repel it, the practice of circumcision in particular – the custom most relevant to the process of gentile conversion – was a quite different matter: it was ridiculed by many Greeks and Romans as a barbaric form of bodily mutilation (Murphy-O'Connor 1996: 229), and was also forbiddingly painful for any adult males who underwent the operation. Furthermore, although the non-exclusive character of Graeco-Roman paganism entailed that in most contexts a considerable range of Jewish customs could be adopted by a gentile without loss of honour among his or her neighbours, gentile submission to the rite of circumcision in particular tended very much to be perceived, especially by members of the upper strata, as a shameful attachment to foreign rites (cf. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 20.38–40).

Circumcision therefore must have prevented more than a few God-fearers (that is, gentiles who sympathised with Judaism to one degree or another but had not yet permitted themselves to be circumcised) from becoming full converts; furthermore, in view of the social problems and related difficulties it could bring to the gentile who submitted to it, circumcision was probably far less popular among the upper strata of society than among those with considerably less to lose. In view of these kinds of considerations, Paul's apparent pre-conversion advocacy of circumcision as a condition for gentile conversion (Gal. 5:11a) can be realistically contextualised within an inner-Jewish conversation precisely about whether circumcision was always necessary in this connection. Not only would

such a discussion give Paul's earlier views some much needed relevance – why after all had he been preaching circumcision if its necessity for the assumed purpose (gentile conversion) had not been under challenge – it also corresponds to a web of assumptions embedded in the first-century Jewish historian Josephus's story about the God-fearing (and eventually proselyte) King Izates of Adiabene, who is torn in different directions by two Jewish teachers with contrasting views concerning the merit of circumcision in his particular case (*Jewish Antiquities* 20.38–46).

Prior to his dramatic experience en route to Damascus, Paul must have internalised tensions and contests similar to those represented in Josephus' narrative about King Izates. Consequently, when the pre-conversion Paul first encountered Christ-followers such as the aforementioned 'Hellenists' and became aware of their proclamation that circumcision was unnecessary for gentiles seeking admission into the people of God, he could easily have seen them as similar in various ways to a range of other Jewish groups he had encountered.

At least one feature of the Hellenists that Paul probably considered distinctive, however, was the degree of success they were achieving at incorporating gentiles into their fellowship, an achievement stemming in part from their substitution of an executed but subsequently resurrected messiah for circumcision as a boundary marker for entering the community. Even worse, almost all the gentiles persuaded by the Hellenists' gospel had been associated, and in many cases probably were still associated, with Jewish synagogues (cf. Acts 9:1–2). To someone like the pre-conversion Paul, then, the views, practices and mission of the Hellenists would have been a scandal on several fronts: first of all, the Hellenists' replacement of circumcision with faith in a cursed criminal executed by the Romans, as the fundamental requirement for entrance into the community, blatantly contradicted the stance to which Paul had already committed himself in the inner-Jewish debates assumed in Gal. 5:11a; second, by encouraging their gentile associates to view themselves not as alien to Israel, but rather as equal participants with Jews in the covenant community, the Hellenists would have been seen by Paul as a serious threat to the boundaries, identity and very existence of Judaism (cf. Dunn 1993: 70); and third, as Paul himself was keenly interested in seeing the honour of Israel's God recognised and increased by the gentiles, the success of the Hellenist mission to non-Jews must have provoked in Paul intense pangs of envy, however peculiar and misguided the theology of that mission must have seemed to him when he first encountered it.

Paul's jealousy of the Hellenists' missionary success also probably helped to lay the psychological foundations for his own conversion. Apart from the suspiciously energetic zeal with which he attacked this group just before his conversion, the evidence for this is limited to a single fascinating comment addressed explicitly to the gentiles in the audience of his Romans letter, written around twenty-two years after his experience on the road to Damascus. More specifically, when he states in this context that he seeks to make the success of his own gentile mission known among his Israelite kinfolk – 'in order', he says, 'to make my own people jealous, and thus save some of them' (Rom. 11:13–14) – the connections that he assumes between successful ministry to gentiles, the potential jealousy of non-Christian Jews who hear of his missionary accomplishments among the nations, and the possibility that this jealousy might lead some of these Jews to the salvation now proclaimed by Paul, create a missiological formula that encapsulates what Paul could easily have deduced, in retrospect, from the circumstances of his own conversion. If, as a strict Pharisee with an interest in fulfilling Israel's witness to the nations, Paul had been provoked to jealousy by the success of the Hellenists' outreach to the gentiles, and thereby lured to Christ, then perhaps other observant Jews might be stimulated to jealousy by the success of his mission, and so unite themselves with the Christ of his gospel. Furthermore, as is commonly overlooked but discussed further below, that same set of interconnected motifs in Rom. 11:13–14 is strengthened by Luke's frequently criticised portrayal of Paul as one who, though his call may have been to proclaim Christ among the gentiles, persistently preached his gospel to the Jew first (Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:1–3, 10, 17; 18:1–11), even though this sometimes resulted in painful punishments from unsympathetic authorities in the synagogues (2 Cor. 11:24).[10]

Spirit affliction and ecstasy in Paul's conversion/call

Paul's jealousy of the Hellenists was only one of several forces that had to coincide in order to effect his conversion. Another factor that, due to its significance for the subsequent development of Paul's theology, merits special attention here is the onset of an illness that befell him as he was en route to Damascus. The most explicit evidence for this illness is found, once again, in the Lukan account, though it possibly has some attestation in Paul's own letters. More specifically, in the first of Luke's three accounts of Paul's conversion (Acts 9:1–19a), the circumstances of Paul's vision of the resurrected Jesus are described as including both an affliction – he is unable to see for three days (9:9) – and a subsequent healing (9:17–19), accomplished in Damascus through the hands of the disciple Ananias. Both the onset of illness and the therapy, moreover, are loosely linked by the narrator of Acts to mundane processes of eating and drinking: the initial vision is followed immediately not only by blindness but also by abstinence from food for three days, during which additional visions are experienced (9:12), while the process of healing includes 'taking some food' (9:19), which is said to restore the patient's strength.

While the period of abstinence here is not presented by the narrator of Acts as having preceded Paul's initial vision and loss of sight, but rather as having followed immediately afterwards, the

Figure 7.4 *The Conversion of St Paul*, a limewood relief by Christoph Daniel Schenck (1633–1691), with Christ's utterance to Paul in Acts 9:4, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?', inscribed in Latin on the arrow emanating from Christ's mouth. Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program

prominence of fasting and eating in that context raises the question whether a period of abstinence from food may have conditioned Paul's religious experience on the road to Damascus. That way of modelling Paul's experience finds support from several relevant considerations. Fasting, for instance, is well attested in antique religious sources as one of the most widely used methods of inducing altered states of consciousness and ecstatic experiences of the spirit world (Luck 1985: 8, 11).[11] Second, and relatedly, a wealth of psychiatric and related research on the effects of being deprived of physiologically basic provisions such as food and sleep indicates why this kind of self-deprivation is able to induce these states: namely, by destabilising the physiological processes that enable human beings to interpret reality in the mundane but pragmatically reliable ways of everyday experience, it can often trigger alternative perceptions of reality that many health care specialists would label as hallucinatory or even psychotic (Walsh 1997: 110–14). And finally, later in Luke's narrative, after Paul has become an effective witness to Christ among both Jews and gentiles, a group of more than forty zealous non-Christian Jews are described not only as harbouring the same kind of hostility to Paul that Paul himself had displayed earlier to the Hellenists, but also as having 'bound themselves by an oath *neither to eat nor drink* [italics mine] until they had killed Paul' (Acts 23:12; cf. vv. 14, 21); perhaps Paul too, then, in his earlier zeal to destroy the Hellenists, had employed such techniques.

As this kind of strategic fasting for particular socioreligious objectives was well-known in the Judaism of Paul's day and firmly established among Christians in the immediately ensuing centuries (Brown 1988: 218–24), the thesis that Paul had included this strategy among others in his attack against the Hellenists is not historically implausible. For in addition to explaining both his illness and his attendant encounter with the heavenly Christ, this sort of scenario corresponds to a pattern of interconnected experiences – some physiological, others mystical – which Paul claims in his own letters to have had. Most notably, in 2 Cor. 11:27, Paul explicitly includes sleeplessness and deprivation of food and drink among the routine experiences that distinguish his apostleship from that of his opponents; and in the immediately ensuing chapter of the same document (in its canonical form) he establishes an overt link between his own ongoing struggles with some form of spirit affliction – 'a thorn . . . in the flesh, a messenger of Satan' (2 Cor. 12:7) he calls it – and mystical experiences which, though they cannot be unproblematically identified with the revelatory experience of his conversion, certainly seem to have had much in common with it (Segal 1990: 35–38).[12] Writing to the churches of Galatia, he speaks of some physical weakness, possibly connected with his eyes, which contributed to the circumstances leading to his initial proclamation of the gospel in that context (Gal. 4:12–15).

Notwithstanding the conjectural character of any aetiology that might be assigned to Paul's affliction, one point seems virtually certain: like his subsequent 'visions and revelations' (2 Cor. 12:1), the experience that Paul himself viewed, at least in retrospect, as an essential part of his own call to proclaim Christ, occurred in connection with an illness. Just as importantly, though, the timing of this illness coincided with his trip to Damascus – a journey undertaken with the deliberate aim of persecuting a movement that was worshipping the spirit of a man recently crucified. One question therefore which ought to be asked (but seldom is in discussions of Paul's conversion) is how someone like Paul would have been inclined to understand an instance of affliction that happened to intersect strenuous participation in a socioreligious conflict.

As a Pharisee and, thus, as someone who believed in angels and spirits and demons,[13] Paul would have been strongly predisposed to interpret this illness as the work either of God or of some lower, possibly demonic, spirit being; furthermore, due to the aforementioned synchronism of the affliction and the conflict with the Hellenists – a phase during which, by Paul's own later admission, he 'was violently persecuting the church of God and trying to destroy it' (Gal. 1:13) – it is highly unlikely that he would have seen the two sets of phenomena as unrelated. In his eyes, there probably were only two ways in which his affliction could be interpreted: either his current antagonists, the Hellenists, had employed some magico-religious ritual, like those abundantly attested in ancient cursing formulas (Gager 1992: 25–30, 175–98), to conjure up a malevolent spirit (perhaps that of

their violently killed hero) against him, or, far more disturbing in the long term, the illness was in accordance with the good pleasure of the Almighty Himself, who therefore would be understood as intervening on behalf of the Hellenists, and against Paul.

If, as suggested above, Paul's persecution of the Hellenists was partly coloured by pangs of jealousy over the success of their mission to the gentiles, he may have needed very little time after his illness on the road to Damascus to interpret this experience as the intervention of his opponents' now resurrected and vindicated founder. Although his subsequent interactions with the church in Damascus undoubtedly contributed to the positive interpretation which he eventually assigned to this event, he may well have been predisposed to construe it in this dramatically self-redefining way quite apart from the Christian community's influence: as modern studies of conversion suggest, people tend not to convert to a 'new' pattern of religion unless they are unhappy in some way with their 'old' one (Stark 1996: 19). But however far Paul may have travelled down the path to his conversion/call before arriving at Damascus, his willingness to travel yet farther in that direction was undoubtedly increased by his experience in Damascus of appearing before his enemies in a state of physical weakness.

Furthermore, a combination of factors working in unison – Paul's pre-conversion awareness of the Hellenists' universalist proclivities, his interpretation of his illness as the work of his enemies' vindicated founder, and his shift of allegiance from Torah observance (and thus circumcision) to faith in Christ as the boundary marker for membership in the community of salvation – all would have encouraged him to conceptualise the agency that confronted him in his illness less as the historically particular Jewish male Jesus of Nazareth than as the universal spirit of the Hellenists' Christ (Boyarin 1994: 39).[14] Indeed, this conception of Jesus' person became one of the most consequential axioms of Paul's whole missionary enterprise, theology and legacy. For it not only played a key role in his efforts to promote a tangible social unity between Jewish and gentile believers in Jesus but also eventually contributed, in ways Paul neither could have foreseen nor would have approved, to both the 'gentilisation'[15] of the churches and to the gradually widening split between Judaism and Christianity.

In Paul's own eyes, of course, the main functions of Jesus' universal lordship were to provide grounds for the inclusion of gentiles, as equal members together with Jews, in the people of God, and to create conditions whereby these Jewish and gentile members would be able to worship and fellowship together in unity, with no member having to surrender every trace of his or her ethnic particularity. While actualising this ideal even on a limited scale was no easy task, the apostle's own letters generally agree with the narratives about him in Acts concerning how energetically he worked to turn his vision of Jew–gentile unity in Christ into a social reality. In his letter to the churches of Galatia, for example, whose gentile members had recently been persuaded by Torah-observant Jewish Christians to believe that full conversion to Judaism (i.e. circumcision) was necessary for salvation (Gal. 1:6–9; 3:1–5), Paul argues that a proper understanding of his Torah-free gospel had already made table fellowship between Jewish and uncircumcised gentile believers not only possible, but a fact of ecclesial praxis (Gal. 2:11–14). This same gospel is furthermore inseparably linked in Paul's mind to the Spirit of Christ that had come to possess him at his conversion (Gal. 1:15–16), which also had mystically united him with Christ so as to radically alter his self-understanding (Gal. 2:19–20), and which the Galatians themselves had received when they accepted Paul's law-free gospel (Gal. 3:2–5). Indeed, in the rhetorical situation addressed by this same remarkable letter, those same experiences of the Spirit are represented by Paul as entailing the validity of his interpretation of the Gospel, for at least in retrospect he saw those experiences as having been facilitated not by observance of Torah (i.e. the laws given to Israel through Moses) but rather by trust in Christ.

A comparative perspective on Galatians and 1 Corinthians

In contrast to the Galatians letter, whose distinctive situation inspired Paul to emphasise the obsolescence of the Torah with regard to salvation, his so-called *First Letter to the Corinthians* was powerfully shaped by a need to stress the law's abiding relevance to matters of morality and ethical conduct

(Fee 1987: 17–18). Particularly prominent among those matters are various types of sexual sin, idolatry and deviations from widely accepted norms of conduct expected of husbands and wives. Strikingly, in response to each of those problems, Paul relies heavily on the Torah to provide at least part of the necessary corrective (1 Cor. 5:6–8, 13; 10:1–13; 11:7–10). By applying the Torah to the moral problems of the Corinthian church, Paul may seem to have allowed his response to be so deeply shaped by the contingencies of the church's situation that he has compromised the Christ-Torah antithesis which, as noted above, pervades his letter to the Galatians. However, if we wish to understand the larger web of concepts implied by Paul's letters, we must not allow suspicions of incoherence to submerge completely the hermeneutical continuities that cut across his different compositions; and here, three such continuities are particularly worth noting.

First, as in 1 Corinthians so in Galatians, Paul does in fact commend the law, reinterpreted in light of the coming of Christ, as a moral bulwark against self-indulgence (Gal. 5:13–15).[16] Second, in both letters Paul applies a broadly allegorical hermeneutic to the pertinent passages of the Torah in order to arrive at the desired ethical maxim: examples of this tendency include the spiritualisation of food and drink in 1 Cor. 10:1–5 and of Abraham's two wives in Gal. 4:21–31 (Boyarin 1994: 32–34). And third, just as Paul perceived the crisis in Galatia as analogous to previous threats to his ideal of tangible unity between Jews and gentiles in Christ (Gal. 2:11–14), so also he probably saw many of the problems in Corinth as obstacles to the same socioreligious goal; his instructions in 1 Cor. 16:1–4, for instance, regarding the monetary collection for the impoverished Jewish believers in the Jerusalem church, were certainly regarded by Paul himself, if not also by his predominantly gentile audience in Corinth, as a way of fostering unity between Jewish and gentile believers in Christ (see esp. Rom. 15:25–27; Witherington 1995: 314).[17] To be sure, the tension between the purposes of the collection and the difficulties addressed earlier in the letter is not asserted on the surface level of the text, but its reality and impact on Paul's response are tacitly signalled

Figure 7.5 The Corinthian *bema* ('dais') from which Lucius Junius Gallio, proconsul of Achaia, would have heard the charges brought by local Jews against Paul (Acts 18:12–17), charges described in that context as part of an intra-Jewish squabble and dismissed as having no consequence to Rome and her officials. Photo Philip F. Esler

by the macro-structural parallelism that unfolds through his repeated use of the construction 'Now concerning' (Greek *peri de*), which, in addition to introducing the collection issue (16:1), serves to broach a variety of ethical problems (e.g. the cases of sexual immorality mentioned in 7:1 and idolatry in 8:1; see also 7:25) whose presence in the Corinthian community would have made the 'saints' of the Jerusalem church anxious about being identified with such a group.

Further comparison of Galatians and 1 Corinthians discloses another contrast worthy of comment. In general terms, whereas the prominence of the circumcision issue in the implied situation of Galatians presupposes that the only people of consequence in that controversy are males (Stowers 1994: 73–74), the foregrounding of topics pertaining to gender and sexuality in 1 Corinthians (e.g. 1 Cor. 5:1–13; 6:12–20; 7:1–40; 11:2–16) presupposes a situation in which both men and women play important roles. In particular regard to gender, sexuality and the human body, the process by which the Corinthian community arrived at its beliefs and practices must have included interplay between instruction Paul had previously given the community face to face (2:1–5) and assumptions which the Corinthians had internalised prior to their conversion. As the assumptions held in those regards by at least part of that community (e.g. the so-called 'strong' faction in particular) have been shown by Dale Martin not to have been distinctively Jewish but rather 'a more general upper-class Greco-Roman ideology' (Martin 1995: 207–8) that placed the body and sexual activity at the bottom of human values, the use of Pauline teaching regarding the implications of baptism in that context – 'there is no male and female' (Gal. 3:28) – to promote sexual asceticism within marriage (1 Cor. 7:1–7), condone divorce (7:10–16) and devise patterns of worship that blurred customary distinctions between the sexes, is scarcely surprising (e.g. 1 Cor. 7:1–40; 11:2–16).

However, despite the role that Paul's own previous teaching may have played in the formation of that synthesis, the apostle viewed the resultant amalgam as a threat to the purity of the community. Indeed, in view of the aforementioned parallelism between Paul's initial references to some of the church's problems on the one hand (1 Cor. 7:1, 25; 8:1) and his subsequent mention of the collection for the Jerusalem church on the other (16:1–4), as well as his awareness of practices accepted by 'the churches [note the plural] of God' collectively (11:6), Paul undoubtedly assessed the troubles noted above at least partly in terms of how they might damage the community's reputation among other Christ-followers (especially in Jerusalem), how they might impact on his collection strategy and how they might ultimately undermine the honour of his own ministry.

That the baptismal formula attested in Gal. 3:28, moreover, did in fact play a role in the gender troubles of the Corinthian community is suggested by the well-known absence of the 'male and female' phrase from the version employed in 1 Cor. 12:13 (Horrell 1996: 169), where Paul explains, 'For in the one Spirit we were all baptised into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit'. Since the Gal. 3:28 version is probably closer to what Paul normally taught his new converts, the increasingly recognised success of the Pauline churches at winning the allegiance of women in particular (MacDonald 1996: 78–79, 189–95) is scarcely surprising. As implied in both 1 Cor. 7:1–40 and 11:2–16, many female converts apparently interpreted their ecstatic experience of the Spirit at baptism as entailing the end of confinement to the kinds of private roles (e.g. submissive wife, caring mother) which Greco-Roman codes of tradition had long assigned them. And, while it would certainly be anachronistic to equate either Paul's spiritual ideal or the ancient churches' imperfect realisation of it with 'feminism', it would be equally misleading to suggest that women among the Christ-followers experienced all the frustrations common in their patriarchal environment (Beattie 2005: 54). Women married to non-Christian men, for instance, are encouraged by Paul not to rule out the unconventional possibility that, instead of simply adopting (as most wives did) the religion of their husbands, they might actually function as God's chosen means of bringing their husbands to salvation (1 Cor. 7:16). Similarly, rather than advising all unmarried women and widows in the church to embed themselves through marriage in the identity of some marriageable male, Paul actually commends his own preference, namely singleness and celibacy, to all that can endure it – not only male but also female – as long as they do not succumb to sexual passion

or extramarital intercourse (1 Cor. 7:7, 25–26, 32–40). And consonant with those same positions are the prominent roles and levels of status that Paul implicitly assigns to various female converts in the personal notes and greetings in the endings of Rom. 16:1–16 and Phil. 4:2–3.

Ethnic difference and Pauline adaptability among Jews and gentiles

Unlike Ignatius of Antioch (*c.* 35–107), whose letter to the Magnesians assumes the existence of 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' as clearly distinct entities, Paul in his letters never gives the impression that the Christ cult he promotes can be conceptualised as something outside his own deeply Jewish world of assumptions and practices. Indeed, although a big step towards the aforementioned rhetoric of difference in Ignatius might seem to be taken by Paul's earliest biographer, the author of the Acts of the Apostles, who twice shows awareness of the word-group adapted by Ignatius only a few decades later for the purposes of his own discourse, any movement in that direction to be inferred from the narrative in Acts should not be understood as very great; for in both of the key Lukan passages, the term *Christianos* signifies a group understood to be predominantly Jewish, albeit hybridised and ethnically mixed, in the context of reference (Klutz 2008: 172–79).

The similarity between the Pauline and the Lukan perspectives on that matter can be partly explained by considering that although Paul's converts certainly included gentiles from backgrounds largely or even completely pagan (1 Thess. 1:9; Gal. 4:8), the access he had as a Jew to social networks associated with diaspora synagogues must have aided his evangelistic work among a particular class of non-pagan gentiles: namely, the so-called God-fearers, mentioned briefly above, many of whom would have been psychologically ripe for Paul's circumcision-free gospel because of the status ambiguity they endured among their Jewish acquaintances. In fact, in view of the role that social networks play in most conversions to new religious movements, the sorts of pagan (i.e. non-God-fearing) gentiles that would have been most likely to take an interest in Paul's gospel would have been those who possessed social connections to gentiles of the God-fearing sort, whose involvement in the life of the synagogue scarcely would have prevented them from maintaining a wide range of relationships with persons untouched by Judaism. As Abraham Malherbe observes, Paul's normal pattern in each of his missionary locales was to begin in the synagogues, where, after winning an audience from the local God-fearers (and perhaps a few Jews), he would eventually encounter strong opposition (2 Cor. 11:24–25); once the opposition became an obstacle to further fruitful participation in the synagogue, he would then rely both on opportunities provided by his own workshop and on the households of whatever sympathisers he had found in the Jewish community to consolidate and expand his network of potential followers (Malherbe 1983: 68–69). Thus, although the prominence of synagogues and God-fearers in the Acts account of Paul's missionary work (e.g. Acts 13:14–48; 16:13–15; 17:10–12) is something of an exaggeration, stemming in part from a rhetorical need to defend Paul against charges of apostasy (Acts 21:21), it is not without support from Paul's own letters (e.g. 2 Cor. 11:24) and probably points to a routine feature of his missionary endeavours.[18]

Alongside Paul's high degree of continuity with his Israelite cultural heritage, however, was a pastoral philosophy that contained seeds of discontinuity and momentous change in regard to the Christ congregations' ethnic composition. The seeds in question consisted of Paul's approach to the problem of how the ethnically diverse range of people in the Christ cult might best be enabled to accept one another, given their diverse individual blendings of ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic level, as equal members of the one people of God. A key facet of Paul's preferred solution can be seen in his teaching that, since in Christ the physical practices of Judaism have no direct relation to the essential domains of the heart and the Spirit (Rom. 2:28–29), those who belong to Christ are free to follow their own conscience regarding those practices. A closely related and equally important feature of that same philosophy was the notion that each Christ-follower's practice of free conscience must always be subordinated to and motivated by a loving concern for the welfare of others in the community, especially that particular subgroup of others understood to be 'weak in faith' (i.e. those whose understanding of liberty had not yet progressed to Paul's level of insight).

Figure 7.6 Streets and shops in the ancient agora of Thessaloniki, whose first community of Christ-followers, composed of gentiles alone, was established by Paul and praised by the apostle for its exemplary faith and hope (1 Thes. 1:2–10). Photo Philip F. Esler

Contributing to a larger programme of moral leadership and guidance that resembles contemporaneous Epicurean ideals more than it does the ethics of Jewish Scripture, this Pauline ethic of adaptability allowed the apostle not only to follow Jewish custom when it suited his purposes but also to tolerate the continuation of Jewish practices by select Jewish (but not gentile) members of his churches (1 Cor. 9:19–23);[19] yet because the same principle could be used to relativise the importance of dietary and calendrical observances, and thus to reduce their status to that of non-essential externals (cf. Rom. 14:1–23), it must have prevented nearly all Jews other than the most assimilated types from attaching themselves to churches in Paul's sphere of influence. For whatever being Jewish meant in the eyes of the kinds of Jews Paul encountered in the synagogues of the diaspora, it rarely if ever could have entailed rating the aforementioned practices as merely peripheral; on the contrary, the cultural difference of being Jewish consisted at least partly of taking those same customs as essential markers of one's identity (Boyarin 1994: 9–10; Esler 1998), and the almost complete absence of Jewish parallels to the conceptual space shared by Paul with the Epicureans – Josephus' portrayal of the Sadducees is perhaps the sole notable exception (Croy 2000: 326) – only reinforces the impression noted above that the apostle's house of psychagogic adaptability would not have felt like a home to most of his Jewish contemporaries outside the Christ cult.

Paul's pastoral praxis of adaptability therefore held little promise in the long term of attracting future generations of Jews into the churches he founded, whatever degree of effectiveness it may have had as a short-term strategy of engaging present Christ-followers in reciprocal exhortation and moral improvement. The apostle's commitment to a strategy limited by what may seem, at least to our eyes, as a form of myopia, should not surprise us; for his expectation of Christ's imminent return (1 Cor. 7:29–31; 1 Thess. 4:13–5:11) virtually precluded any formulation of a long-term pastoral

strategy that might enhance the Christ cult's evangelistic activities among both gentiles and Jews (Donaldson 1997: 246). So, when Paul's expectation of Christ's return failed to materialise and thus needed to be revised by his students, his own precedent of devaluing the key markers of Jewish identity came to be reinterpreted in various ways and, in some contexts, given meanings that Paul himself could never have envisioned (Martyn 1997: 84). With the aid of hindsight, it is tempting to say that what happened to the Christ cult's ethnic constituency in the initial generations after Paul might easily have been predicted by some ancient ethnographer watching Paul's operations with the hypothetical detachment of a non-participant observer. Whatever value that speculation might possess, the predictable progress of the Christ cult's gentilisation did in fact continue apace, as illustrated by a few key developments in the Wirkungsgeschichte of Paul's letters (i.e. the history of their use, effects and influence) and of the teachings of the Hellenists, with whom the present story began.

Gentile mission, anti-Judaism, and the afterlife of Galatians in Marcionism

The letters of Paul, it is now widely acknowledged, have been reinterpreted and used in a great variety of ways, with diverse and sometimes conflicting effects, from the moment of each letter's initial reception down to our own time. One particular sequence in that larger story of reception intersects the present narrative about the gentilisation of the Christ cult in a singularly interesting and, I believe, very illuminating way. The sequence in question is best conceptualised for my present purpose as having the mid second-century Christian thinker Marcion's treatment of Paul's Galatians letter,[20] discussed at various points above, as its focal point, and being connected on either side to Galatians' original context of production (*c.* 50 CE) and to anti-Marcionite discourse in the heresiologists Tertullian (*c.* 160–225 CE) and Epiphanius of Salamis (*c.* 315–403 CE). Epiphanius' critique of the Marcionites' use of Galatians serves as the best possible beginning for the ensuing analysis, not least because of the clarity with which he defines both the problem and his perspective on it.

Epiphanius on the placement of Galatians in Marcionite copies of Paul's letters

According to Epiphanius' *Panarion* (*c.* 374–376, also known as the *Refutation of All the Heresies*), most of the Christian churches of his time have a collection of Paul's letters whose sequence begins with Romans and proceeds in the order familiar to most readers/hearers of the New Testament throughout the history of the church (*Panarion* 42.11.7–8). One of the numerous problems posed by Marcion and his disciples in Epiphanius' day, the heresiographer explains, is that their collections of Paul's letters do not have Romans 'in first place' but rather have Galatians in that position and thereby deviate from 'all the copies which are sound and true' (*Panarion* 42.12.3). Epiphanius' objection to Marcion's placement of Galatians rather than Romans at the beginning of his collections of Paul's letters raises a host of questions too numerous and complex for adequate treatment here,[21] but for purposes of the present narrative at least one of them deserves immediate attention: namely, since Galatians was undoubtedly composed and first read/heard prior to Paul's composition of Romans, why in subsequent contexts of reception should Galatians not be read or heard without Romans having been read first? What is it about Romans that should give it value as a type of hermeneutical control for early Christian reading of Paul's other letters, and in particular Galatians? But more importantly for the present narrative, what is it about Galatians that could make that letter potentially dangerous (or at least unsuitable) reading material for a Christian who had not already become familiar with the apostle on the basis of prior reading/hearing of Romans and the Corinthian correspondence? By putting into the foreground considerations of hermeneutical framing, theological controls and canon-formation, I do not intend to suggest that those are the only factors relevant to an adequate explanation of Epiphanius' perspective; but as indicated below, in the construction of the larger canon of the

New Testament,[22] decisions about the optimal sequencing of writings in an authoritative collection were informed very much by hermeneutical and theological factors, in ways that illuminate not only the letters of Paul but also the larger historical process of the Christ movement's gentilisation.

Both for the sake of clarity in my own analysis, and to preview much of what remains to be told in the present story, a brief outline of how the questions just posed might best be answered ought to be offered here. In the first place, and against any overhasty assault upon the bishop of Salamis, it is likely that Epiphanius' objection to the elevation of Galatians in Marcionite collections of Paul's letters was related to other features of Marcionite teaching which Epiphanius himself and many other Christians in the latter half of the fourth century considered unsalutary (Tyson 2006: 36). To be more precise, for the purposes of arguing against Marcion's identification of the creator god of Jewish Scripture as the Demiurge, against his theology of radical discontinuity between Israel and the new revelation of love brought by Jesus, and against his more generally anti-Judaic outlook (Gager 2000: 12), the Pauline epistle that gives more attention than any of his other letters to his conflicts with other Judean members of the Christ cult (e.g. Gal. 2:11–14; 5:7–12) and to his relativisation of the worth of various aspects of Jewish tradition (e.g. Gal. 4:8–11; 5:2–6) would have been a very weak line of defence, less effective by far than some of Paul's other letters (e.g. Romans, esp. chaps 9–11, and the Corinthian correspondence) and the second volume of Luke-Acts, with its revisionist frontgrounding of Paul as a Torah-loving embodiment of salvation-historical continuity (Tyson 2006: 62–78) would increasingly prove to be. Thanks chiefly to the Marcion movement, early Christian heresiographers such as Epiphanius and Tertullian acquired an understanding of how very promiscuous Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia could be without a circle of carefully chosen intertextual chaperones.

But just as importantly, in terms of the letter's influence upon subsequent religious discourse and practice, Galatians must have seemed at best a work of apostasy whenever it fell into the hands of early Jewish readers outside the Christ cult, so that its best chances for favourable reception would have been in heavily gentile or even anti-Jewish contexts such as Marcion's, whose missionary activity in general and distinctive handling of Paul's letters in particular would almost certainly have reinforced and expanded the process of gentilisation advanced earlier by the Hellenists, Paul and Ignatius among others. Accordingly, while the ethnic composition of Marcionite communities is a matter given little or no attention in most of the relevant scholarship,[23] a paucity of Jews in that network is a reasonable inference to draw from the character of Marcion's theology (Stark 1996: 65). Moreover, in view of the wide scholarly agreement that Marcion was hugely successful as a planter of new churches,[24] he must remain a leading candidate for the most powerful known driver behind the mechanisms of gentilisation throughout the church's first two centuries.

Canonical hermeneutics, heresiography and the gentile mission in Tertullian versus Marcion

As acknowledged above, the portrayal of Marcion by Epiphanius is highly polemical; it is also produced for a context roughly 200 years later than that during which Marcion was active, shows no interest in diversity or processes of change in Marcionism across time, and probably exaggerates the similarities between Marcionism and various gnostic-like groups active in Epiphanius' day. Yet an important facet of Epiphanius' portrayal is corroborated, much closer to Marcion's time, by Tertullian, who confirms that Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia did indeed perform a lot of the heavy lifting in the construction of Marcion's programme: 'Marcion has got hold of Paul's epistle to the Galatians', says Tertullian, 'and on this ground Marcion strives hard to overthrow the credit of those gospels which are the apostles' own . . . with the intention no doubt of conferring on his gospel the repute which he takes away from those others' (Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 4.3.2). Having thus acceded the potential congeniality of Galatians to Marcion's perspective, Tertullian explains that potential partly by highlighting, shortly afterwards in the same treatise, that Galatians is 'the epistle . . . we allow to be the most decisive against Judaism' (5.2.1), a perception which, it is worth adding here, would

have made that epistle a much better device for persuading gentiles (especially from within the wider church) than for converting Jews. Despite such allowances, however, Tertullian judges Marcion's interpretation of Galatians as a harmful sort of misreading; and one of Tertullian's main reasons for that judgement, though he never says so directly, is that the Marcionites do not read Galatians in dialogue with Tertullian's prescribed intertexts – namely, the story of Paul in the Acts of the Apostles, excluded from Marcion's canon and thereby fatefully separated from Luke's 'former treatise' (i.e. the Gospel of Luke, which Marcion revised and accepted in a form known to Tertullian), and Paul's so-called First Letter to the Corinthians, included in Marcionite collections of Paul's letters but placed after Galatians in the sequence and thus arguably given lesser importance.[25]

At least partly because Tertullian knows that the Marcionites rejected the Acts of the Apostles, a choice criticised by Tertullian as motivated by theological perversity (*Against Marcion* 5.2), the heresiographer describes his own riposte to Marcionism as consisting of 'evidence from the epistles of St. Paul himself' (5.1), a point foregrounded both by its repetition at the end of Tertullian's counter-reading of the apostle's letters (5.21) and by an inclusio structure completed by that same instance of recurrence. Furthermore, by starting his own treatment of the evidence with a reading of Galatians (5.1–4, before treating either 1–2 Corinthians 5.5–12, or Romans 5.13–14!), Tertullian confirms the special importance attached by the Marcionites to that particular letter. To his credit, in regard to no less than nine of the ten Pauline letters accepted by the Marcionites, Tertullian is as faithful to his claim about the Pauline character of his evidence as anyone could be while dealing with texts whose meanings are demonstrably and very richly intertextual (5.5–21); in that same context, the one epistolary sheep more prone than any of Paul's other letters to being led away from the proto-orthodox fold, more vulnerable to capture by the savage wolves of Marcionism in particular, is Galatians, for whose rescue Tertullian sends his trusty theological sheepdog, the Acts of the Apostles.

For that particular purpose, the Acts of the Apostles is significant both for its representation of Paul's interactions with the apostle Peter and the Jerusalem church as having been distinguished not

Marcion	**Tertullian Ag.Marc. 5**	**Epiphanius**
Galatians	Galatians	Romans
1 Corinthians	1 Corinthians	1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians	2 Corinthians	2 Corinthians
Romans	Romans	Galatians
1 Thes.	1 Thes.	Ephesians
2 Thes.	2 Thes.	Philippians
Ephesians	Ephesians	Colossians
Colossians	Colossians	1 Thes.
Philemon	Philippians	2 Thes.
Philippians	Philemon	
	1 Timothy	1 Timothy
	2 Timothy	2 Timothy
Laodiceans	Titus	Titus
		Philemon
		Hebrews

Figure 7.7 The identity and order of Pauline letters in Marcionite collections (according to Epiphanius, *Panarion* 42.8, 11–12); Tertullian's commentary-riposte in *Against Marcion* 5.2–21; and Epiphanius, *Panarion* 42.11.8–9 and 42.12.3

by the kind of discord inferred in Marcionite interpretation of Galatians but rather by unity and concord (*Against Marcion* 5.3), and thus also for clearly identifying the god of Paul's Christ as the god of Peter, the other apostles and the writers of the Old Testament (5.2).[26] However, for the purposes of the present narrative, the significance attributed by Tertullian to the Book of Acts is less noteworthy than the absence of certain meanings he could have inferred from that text but concerning which he in fact shows no interest; namely, the potential of Acts to serve as a legitimation of the gentile mission, the spread of the gospel from Jew to gentile, and thus also the increasingly gentile constituency of the Christ cult. Not unlike the composer of Luke-Acts, the implied author of *Against Marcion* therefore shows less interest in producing evangelistic literature designed to win gentiles for Christ than in revising the image of Saint Paul in a manner that challenges emerging portrayals of the apostle as a precursor of some heretical teacher or another. But just as importantly, and notwithstanding the possibility that the Book of Acts was written by a former travelling-companion and missionary assistant of Paul's, neither that writer nor Tertullian is likely to have contributed as much as Marcion of Sinope did both to the expansion of the Christ movement and to its further gentilisation.

Conclusion

The historiography of early Christian missionary activity has never to my knowledge suggested that the Christ cult's first 125 to 150 years of success in converting non-Jews to faith in Christ was inseparably interwoven with early Christian processes of deviance-labelling and constructing the heretical other. In different ways, each of the main phases in that development suggests that such an interweaving deserves serious attention. The case of Marcion in that connection should by now be so obvious as to require no further discussion here; indeed, the main reason for Marcion's surprising absence in most accounts of the Christ cult's incorporation of gentiles during the second century probably consists in good measure of the effectiveness with which his movement was labelled as deviant and heretical by some of the major early Christian heresiographers and their theological allies.

The case of Paul, on the other hand, will undoubtedly seem to be, in the eyes of many, so different from that of Marcion that the former may seem to be immune to any taint of deviance or heresy. After all, the thirteen letters attributed to Paul in the New Testament have long been an important source of norms in the development and maintenance of Christian orthodoxy. How then can Paul be compared to Marcion or be perceived as a potential heretic? The story of Paul in my narrative offers the rudiments of a potentially satisfactory answer to that question: namely, the Paul of Christian orthodoxy is very much a product of Luke's revisionist characterisation of him in Acts, the still later representation of Paul's thought in contexts such as Tertullian's, and the eventual placement of both the Acts of the Apostles and Paul's longest letters ahead of Galatians in the formation of the canon of the New Testament. The Paul of the undisputed letters, and especially of the biographical section of Galatians, on the other hand, is the proponent of a recent religious innovation – one to which he himself has significantly contributed, and which involves the crossing of well-established socioreligious boundaries – and thus a highly controversial figure accused by some of his Judean contemporaries of being apostate and thus deviant, a challenge later acknowledged by the author of Acts (e.g. 21:17–28), albeit only in order to answer it.

As for the Hellenists introduced in Acts 6 and treated at the beginning of the present account, it has been suggested above that the expulsion of that group from Jerusalem must have been a result of religious and theological tensions more serious than that explicitly mentioned in the Acts account. The story about the Hellenist Stephen, his speech and his martyrdom in a setting of ancient Judean vigilante violence was interpreted above as entailing that he and perhaps other members of the Hellenist element had come to be seen by outgroup Jerusalemite authorities as dangerous deviants, whose consequent migration to various parts of the Jewish diaspora not only coincided with a burst of evangelistic proclamation on their part among gentiles but might be best understood as a continuation of still earlier inter-ethnic outreach to gentiles in and around Jerusalem.

Given the especially group-orientated nature of nearly all ancient Mediterranean persons, what I have inferred above from Acts 6–8 about Stephen might well be applicable to the Hellenist contingent as a whole, with Stephen thus being interpreted as a typical representative of the movement. However, because other probable Hellenists such as Philip the evangelist, Nicolas and Apollos become links in their own larger interdiscursive chains, the evidence concerning each of those figures ought to be analysed just as that concerning Paul and Marcion has been above. That particular task cannot be undertaken properly in the space available here; but if it could, a guiding initiative assumption based on the account above would be that since the behavioural crossing of clearly demarcated boundaries between ethnic groups in Mediterranean antiquity had high potential to be perceived by interested observers as deviant, any pioneers who contributed to the early clearing of paths across the boundary between Jews and gentiles, by including the latter as full members of the Christ cult on the basis of trust in Christ rather than circumcision, would have been running a high risk of being branded a heretic.

Notes

1 Similar to the critique of Hill given here is the fuller discussion in Penner (2004: 40–4).

2 The importance of honour in the first-century Mediterranean world is discussed in Chapter 1 of this work.

3 Hill (1992) has been criticised by Esler (1995) for skating over the conflict apparent in Acts 6:1, a verse which, since F. C. Baur began this debate in the 1830s, has been the most significant item of data in the approach Hill attacks. Hill's subsequent restatement of his position (1996: 129–53), by mentioning Acts 6:1 only in passing, and focussing instead almost entirely on Acts 8:1 and 6:8–7:60, does little to rectify his vulnerability on this point.

4 Inquiry into the usage of the Greek word for 'Hebrews' (*Hebraios*) and its cognate forms strengthens the sense that, from Luke's point of view, more than language habits distinguished the Hebrews from the Hellenists. Although the noun used in Acts 6:1 occurs nowhere else in Luke-Acts, it does occur in 2 Cor. 11:22 and Phil. 3:5, where in both cases it clearly signifies Jewish descent and religious identity. Of course, one may wish to urge, as does Hill (1992: 47–8), that Pauline usage should not be invoked to solve an exegetical conundrum in Luke-Acts; but however fine this sentiment is in theoretical principle, it should not be allowed to obscure a potentially more important consideration – and one that Hill appears to ignore – namely, how the author of Luke-Acts uses the cognate term *Hebrais*. Most importantly, in each of this term's occurrences in Acts (21:40; 22:2; and 26:14) it not only refers to the most commonly used language in Palestine at this time (i.e. Aramaic), but also implies the existence of a special bond of social and cultural solidarity among those who speak this language. For interesting discussion of how a speaker's choice of language in this kind of multilingual environment can tacitly convey a wide range of social, political and ethnic alignments (and antagonisms), see P. Trudgill, *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society*, 2nd ed., London, Penguin Books, 1983, pp. 53–54, 149–50.

5 Admittedly, as Esler (1987: 122–25) observes, by 'defences as to law and jurisdiction' rather than by factual rebuttal.

6 On the phenomenon of escalation see the useful discussion in D. G. Pruitt and J. Z. Rubin, *Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement*, New York, Random House, 1986, pp. 62–87. Challenge-and-response in the Mediterranean context is dealt with generally by Malina (2001: 38–43) and in relation to Paul's relationships with the Jerusalem 'Hebrews' by Esler (1998: 117–40).

7 As the present essay is not intended to be an introduction either to Paul or to the field of Pauline studies but rather is offered as a larger story in which Paul is only one of several major characters, it does not provide a full bibliography on those areas. However, readers intending to go farther into the field of Pauline studies in particular will appreciate the following surveys of the issues, debates and major schools of interpretation: Wright 2015, Given 2010, Zetterholm 2009, Horrell 2006 and Witherington 1998.

8 On the similarity between Paul's pre-conversion motivations for harassing the early 'congregation of God' (Gal. 1:13) and his opponents' reasons for unsettling the Galatian churches, see Esler 1998: 122–4.

9 On the superiority of 'harass' to 'persecute' as the rendering of diōkō in this context, see Harvey (2016: 115–26).

10 For an original and impressively argued interpretation of Romans that understands the missionary-theological strategy of the letter, and indeed of Paul in general, as largely consonant with the Lukan story of Paul, see Nanos 1996: 242–47.

11 See e.g. Mark 4:1–3 (par. Luke 4:1–3); Acts 10:9–10, 13:2–3; Col. 2:16–20; and *Papyri Graecae Magicae* 4.733–39. For further discussion of the role of abstinence in ancient religious trance and ecstasy, see Craffert 2008: 151–55; Klutz 2004: 194–205; Ashton 2000: 68–69; Fowden 1986: 83–84; and Dodds 1951: 140–41.

12 The case for reading 2 Cor. 12:1–10 as an interpretation of shamanic initiation, or conversion/call, is stated particularly well by Ashton 2000: 116–23.
13 On Pharisaic beliefs see, e.g. Josephus, *JA* 18.12–15; and Acts 23:6–9.
14 Ashton 2000: 122.
15 I borrow the term here from Terence Donaldson 1997: ix, who uses it as shorthand for the process whereby the exclusively Jewish movement of Jesus' first followers became an increasingly distinct, non-Jewish religion.
16 Cf. Esler 1998: 203–4, who argues that in Gal. 5:14 Paul means that through (the Spirit's gift of) *agapê* Christ-believers have the best that the Law can provide but from an entirely different source.
17 For more recent treatment of issues surrounding Paul's collection(s) for the relief of impoverished Christ-followers in the Jerusalem church, see Downs 2008: 33–9, who argues that the collection implied in Gal. 2:9–10 was the first of two distinct relief funds organised by Paul.
18 See also Hopkins 1998: 214–15; and Gager 2000: 51, 77, 167–68 n. 38.
19 See Klutz 2003: 210–11 and Glad 1995: 43–45.
20 In addition to the studies cited below in connection with Marcion, see now especially Lieu 2015 and BeDuhn 2013, both for comprehensive treatment of important issues and for full bibliography.
21 A particularly fine introduction to the topic along with commentary on Marcion's use of Galatians is Riches 2007: 11–14 and passim.
22 A process understood by some scholars (e.g. Von Harnack 1990 [1924]; Knox 1942; Von Campenhausen 1972) as having been partly inspired by the prior existence of Marcion's canon; but cf. Bruce 1988: 144; Metzger 1987: 98–99; and Gamble 1985: 59–62.
23 See, e.g. Brakke 2010: 96–99 and passim; May 2006; Lampe 2003: 241–56; and Von Harnack 1990 [1924], none of whom consider the question, with Brakke's silence being the most noteworthy since ethnicity is highlighted as one of the key themes that define his approach to interpreting early Christian diversity (11–15).
24 See, e.g. Lampe 2003: 250–52 and Bauer 1971: 22.
25 My inferences here are based on Tertullian, *Contra Marcionem* 5.1–10 (esp. 5.1–3, 8), where Tertullian's reading of Galatians in particular is constrained more overtly by the Book of Acts and 1 Corinthians than is his interpretation of Paul's other letters. On the prime position of Galatians in Marcionite collections of Paul's letters as evidence of that writing's unique value as a source for Marcionite theology, see Bruce 1988: 139 and Metzger 1987: 94, a view briefly dismissed by Gamble 1985: 41, without stated reason. On the early contribution of the Book of Acts to arguments against Marcionite and similar readings of Paul (esp. Galatians), see Tyson 2006: 49, 68–69; Pervo 2006: 78, 96, 138.
26 Much closer than Tertullian (and probably also Marcion) to the time at which the Book of Acts was composed, broadly similar purposes were perhaps served by the Pastoral Epistles, James and 2 Peter, which in various ways imply situations in which the teachings or even collected writings of Paul were becoming a source of controversy; see especially 1 Tim. 4:1–5; 6:20–21; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:16–18; James 2:14–26; and 2 Pet. 3:14–18.

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8

THE JESUS TRADITION

The gospel writers' strategies of persuasion

Richard L. Rohrbaugh

The writers of the canonical gospels seek to persuade. They try to convince readers of the truth of the story of Jesus. Sometimes they write in order to elicit belief, at other times to confirm or solidify it. But in either case they seek to persuade, and it is primarily their strategies for persuasion that will be of interest to us in what follows. Yet given our cultural distance from the ancient Mediterranean world, not all of these strategies are obvious to readers in modern, western societies.

Analysis of the strategies used by gospel writers to craft persuasive stories has most often been done at the literary level. That is, scholars have identified a variety of literary devices through which ancient writers sought to capture readers' attention, hook them into the story, and gain their sympathy. Such literary studies are extremely valuable, especially when drawing on the instructions in the art of persuasive writing that developed in ancient rhetorical schools.[1]

Yet helpful as these (literary) rhetorical studies have been, they frequently overlook a key factor in the way language, including the language of persuasion, actually works. Sociolinguists have demonstrated that language ultimately derives its meaning from the social system shared by writer and reader (or speaker and hearer).[2] That is so because language is itself a form of *social* interaction. Apart from a shared social context, which leads both speaker and listener to bring similar expectations to a conversation, words, and sentences are meaningless. Indeed, without a shared social system, meanings are often significantly confused, as any cross-cultural conversation is likely to demonstrate. Recognizing the patterns of persuasion in ancient writing is therefore as much a matter of understanding the (shared) ancient social system as it is the literary conventions that were taught in the rhetorical schools.

Another way to make this same point derives from speech accommodation theory (Giles *et al.* 1987; Malina 1994). The basic idea is that speakers or writers tend to accommodate language to audience expectations in order to gain a hearing. Therefore, if the gospel writers are interested in persuading readers to believe the Jesus story, we should expect to find language-accommodation in their accounts. Obviously, however, language that accommodates to and thus attracts or persuades one reader (linguistic convergence) may simultaneously repel and dissuade another reader (linguistic divergence). Thus, as we will have occasion to see, the Jesus story told one way probably attracted non-literate, rural peasants. Yet told that same way it would likely have repelled members of the literate elite. By watching the way the gospel writers shape the Jesus traditions in order to accommodate and converge with their respective audiences, we can gain important clues to their persuasive power.

Figure 8.1 The Sea of Galilee, looking eastward toward Gergesa (Matt. 8:28) and the region of Gaulanitis. Photo: Richard Rohrbaugh

In what follows we shall concentrate on persuasive strategies which are dependent on the shared social system of the ancient Mediterranean world.[3] That is, we shall concentrate on social imperatives rather than literary form—not because the latter is unimportant but because it has been more often studied. Moreover, since space does not permit us to examine these matters comprehensively, we shall seek only to illustrate the phenomenon of social accommodation by looking briefly at one such rhetorical strategy in each of the canonical gospels.

We shall begin with the Gospel of Mark. We do so not only because it was the first of the canonical gospels written, but also because its social location provides a strong contrast to that of the later writers (Matthew and Luke) who used it.[4] Moreover, offering some detail on the social location of the Markan story will enable us to show the contrast in the Matthean and Lukan alternatives clearly. Our first objective then will be to determine what kind of story Mark tells. At what social group is it being pitched? With whom is solidarity being sought? Who might find it attractive or offensive? Whom does it hope to persuade? In short, what is this author's strategy in the *social* interaction he undertakes with his readers?

The social location of Mark's story

We begin with the 'social location' of the Jesus story in Mark. The notion of a social location is not difficult to grasp, though its importance has been little recognized in New Testament scholarship.[5] A social location is simply a position in a social system shared by a group of people. A generation, an occupational group or a social class might be an example. Such collections of people are not 'groups,' in the sense that they are personally acquainted, but rather they are persons who occupy a common position in the social system and therefore share certain kinds of lived experience. Moreover, such social locations are important because they provide the context in which meanings are shared. They do not *cause* certain ways of thinking, but they do make a limited range of ideas or values appear as

plausible alternatives to most people. We need therefore to find a social location, a shared position in the social system, which offers a vantage point from which to think about the persuasive power of the Jesus traditions.

Social stratification

The overwhelming importance of social stratification in ancient Mediterranean societies makes the issue of stratification an ideal choice to meet our needs. It offers us *one* valuable vantage point (among many that are possible) from which to assess the rhetorical strategy of each Gospel writer.[6] The working assumption underlying this choice is that a Jesus story pitched to appeal to persons at one social level, rural peasants for example, would probably have a less positive impact on members of a very different one, such as the urban elite. Since Jesus was transparently a village artisan of very low social status, telling his story to village peasants might present a rather straightforward rhetorical challenge. But how would a gospel writer tell the Jesus story for an elite urban audience which considered village artisans unworthy of imitation? That is a key question we are trying to answer.

In order to make effective use of this particular social location we need first to be clear about the extent and scope of social stratification in antiquity. It is hard for people in the modern, industrial societies of the West to understand the pervasiveness of class conflict in ancient social relations. Yet it was a universal feature of the agrarian social system (Ste. Croix 1981) and impacted everyone in those societies all of the time. Moreover, when we take into account the fact that the gospels reflect

Figure 8.2 Ancient grain mill found near Capernaum. Photo Richard Rohrbaugh

the circumstances during (Mark) and shortly after (Matthew, Luke, John) the Jewish-Roman war (66–73 CE), social stratification becomes all the more important. As David Fiensy has shown, sharp ideological conflict over land ownership existed at the time the revolt broke out. The Israelite elite had come to see land as capital to be exploited, while peasants retained the older view that all the land was owned by Yahweh and given to Israelite families as inalienable plots meant to insure family subsistence (Oakman 1986: 38; Fiensy 1991: 1–20). Hostility was thus in large measure a rural-urban matter in which the zealot revolutionaries were closely identified with rural peasants. In Galilee especially, peasant hostility was aimed primarily at the cities (Horsley 1989: 87). The focus of the dispute was escalating debt and the subsequent loss of peasant land to the urban elite (Rostovzeff 1957; Brunt 1977: 151; Ste. Croix 1981: 7–19). Or as Richard Horsley and John Hanson put it, 'The Zealots, no matter how much their struggle was against the alien Roman oppressors, were first fighting a class war against their own Jewish nobility' (1985: 220–226).

Stratification and the conflict it caused were thus an undeniable part of the social location of the gospels. It affected both authors and audiences. In order to understand this in more detail, however, it will be necessary to describe key social groups which would have been present in or had an impact on life in the area in which the first gospel (Mark) was produced: the villages and small towns of upper Galilee, southern Syria or Transjordan.[7] To structure our comments we will refer to the following diagrammatic description of social relationships in the Herodian period which is typical of advanced agrarian societies (Figure 8.3). It offers a good look at the socially stratified society in which Mark constructed his story of Jesus.

A brief description of five groups noted in Figure 8.3 will suffice to specify the respective positions in the social order that concern us. Each represents a different social location in a system of stratification. Each is likewise a potential audience for a gospel. As we go through the groups we shall carefully specify their presence in Mark's story in order to draw what conclusions we can about the rhetorical strategy he uses to persuade his readers. We will then go on to each of the other gospels in order to show the contrasts.

The urban elite

As Figure 8.3 makes clear, the urban elite made up about 2 percent of the total population. Along with the ruler, it included the highest ranking military officers, ranking priestly families, the Herodians, and other aristocratic families. Their wealth was based primarily on land ownership and taxation, which effectively drained the resources of the rural areas.[8] Being the only group with disposable income, they constituted the only real 'market' in the ancient economy.

This group maintained near total control of writing, coinage, taxation, the military, and judicial systems. Their control was aided by a religious and intellectual elite who typically became the keepers of what scholars call the 'Great Tradition.' Their mannerisms, vocabulary, speech patterns, and dress made the elite easily identifiable on the streets. While they remained physically, socially, and culturally isolated from the rest of the society, their behavior and lifestyle set the standard for the social aspirations of everyone else. The urban elite we can identify in Mark's Gospel are listed below (Figure 8.4).

Social conflict is prevalent in the Gospel of Mark, and much of it derives from the interaction between villagers and those listed in Figure 8.4 (note that *all* of Jesus' opponents come from this group or its retainers). Especially prominent on the list are the scribes. Evidence from ancient papyri suggests they often acted as agents of the urban aristocracy from whom they received rural appointments (Loeb, *Select Papyri II: Non-Literary (Public Documents)*, IX.339: 393). Mark's readers, of course, are warned to:

> [b]eware of the scribes, who like to go about in long robes, and to have salutations in the market places and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at feasts, who devour widow's houses and for a pretense make long prayers.
>
> *(12:38–40)*

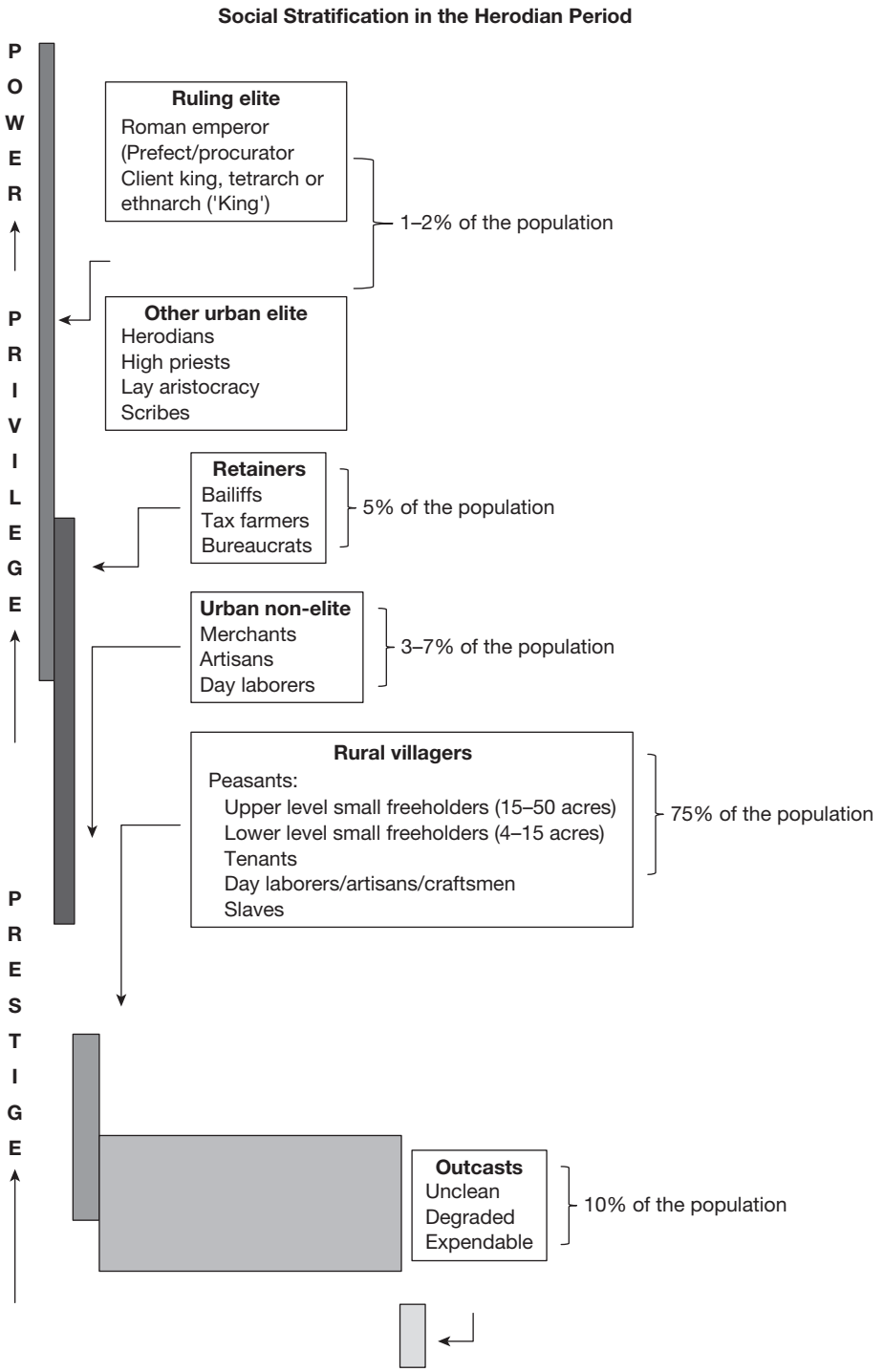

Figure 8.3 Social stratification in the Herodian period. Diagram Richard Rohrbaugh

In Mark's Passion narrative, the scribes link up with Pharisees, elders (non-priestly aristocrats), and chief priests in opposition to Jesus. The Herodians and Sadducees join the opposition as well (3:1–6, 12:13–17, 18–27). Mark predicts that these groups will not only reject Jesus but destroy

The Urban Elite in Mark

Caesar 12:14, 17	Strong man 3:27
Pontius Pilate 15:2, 8, 15	Those who have 4:25
Rulers of the Gentiles 10:42	Elders 8:31; 11:27; 14:43, 53; 15:1
Herod 6:14; 8:15	Rich Man 10:22
Herodias 6:17	Wealthy 10:23, 25
Herodias' daughter 6:22	Vineyard Owner and Son 12:1, 6
Philip 6:17	Sadducees 12:18
Governors 13:9; 15:16	Family of seven brothers 12:20
High Priest 2:26; 14:47, 53, 54, 60,	Rich people 12:41
61, 63, 66	Kings 13:9
Chief Priests 8:31, 10:33; 11:18, 27;	Man going on a journey 13:34
14:1, 10, 43, 53, 55; 15:1, 3, 10, 11, 31	Owner of upper room 14:14
Scribes 1:22; 2:6, 16; 3:22; 7:1, 5; 8:31;	Joseph of Arimathea 15:43
9:11, 14; 10:33; 11:18, 27; 12:28,	Jairus and his family 5:22, 23, 40
35, 38; 14:1, 43, 53; 15:1, 31	

Figure 8.4 The urban elite in the Gospel of Mark

him in the end (10:33). Nonetheless it should be noted that three persons listed in Figure 8.4 are exceptions to the near-universal opposition of the elite to Jesus: the scribe who is 'not far from the kingdom' (12:34), Joseph of Arimathea (15:43), and Jairus (5:21–43). These story-characters prevent us from excluding members of the elite from Jesus' following and may indicate that some such were part of the Markan community.

Retainers

At the lower levels of the elite group and ranging downward toward non-elite levels were those social scientists call retainers (Figure 8.5). This included lower level military officers, officials and bureaucrats such as clerks and bailiffs, personal retainers, household servants, scholars, legal experts, and lower level lay aristocracy. They worked primarily in the service of the elite and often acted as the brokers between the aristocracy and the rest of the population. What power they had depended on their relation to the urban elite.

Retainers in Mark

Pharisees 2:16, 18, 24; 3:6; 7:1, 3, 5;	Physicians 2:17; 5:26
8:11, 15; 10:2; 12:13	Galilean priest 1:44
People from Jairus' house 5:35	Courtiers, officers 6:21
Men arresting John the Baptist 6:17	Judas Iscariot 14:11
Soldier of the guard 6:27	Tax collectors 2:15, 16
Levi 2:14	Moneychangers 11:15
Those selling in the temple 11:15	Doorkeeper 13:34
Servant-girl of High Priest 14:66	Soldiers 15:16
Crowd sent from Chief Priests, scribes	Centurion 15:39
and elders 14:43	Slave/servant 1:20; 9:35; 10:43, 44;
	12:2, 4; 13:34; 14:47

Figure 8.5 Retainers in Mark

It is interesting that we see more people here who are followers of Jesus (the people from Jairus' house, Levi, tax collectors, and the centurion) than we found in the elite group. But the largest group on the list are the Pharisees and they stand in opposition. In Mark, they appear to be literate, local village leaders (in Mark, *contra* Josephus, the Pharisees are in Jerusalem only in 12:13) whom Anthony Saldarini characterizes as a group of retainers competing with the Jesus groups for influence among the non-elite (1988: 71).

In a controversy over ritual cleanliness (2:13–17; 7:1–23), Mark explains for his audience that Pharisees and Judeans (usually translated, incorrectly, 'Jews'; see the comments later on the Gospel of John) wash themselves and their eating vessels in keeping with the 'tradition of the elders.' This of course is the Great Tradition of the literate aristocracy that few peasants could afford to uphold. Note that in Mark's story, Jesus' disciples are clearly identified with this peasant inability (7:5) and that Mark's scribes show the typical aristocratic incomprehension of peasant attitudes or capabilities (*Why* do your disciples . . . ?). In his retort, Jesus not only defends the peasant attitude, but offers another example (7:9–13) in which he distances himself from the practices of the elite ('your' tradition).

Before leaving these two dominant groups, it is worth noting the sheer number of such people in Mark's story. That is surprising since little of Mark's story takes place in the cities where the elite and most of their retainers lived. Yet it must be remembered that it was by means of rural appointments given to retainers that the elite maintained their control in the rural areas.

Urban non-elite

A third group on our diagram (Figure 8.3), the urban non-elite or poor (Figure 8.6), plays a very minor role in Mark's story. It included small-scale merchants, artisans, day laborers, and a variety of service workers. In most agrarian societies this group represented about 3 to 7 percent of the total population. Their health and nutrition were often worse than in the villages, and life expectancies were shorter: a child born among the lower classes in the city of Rome during the first century had a life expectancy of only 20 years (Lenski and Lenski 1987: 249). Given the high death rates among the urban poor, the cities were able to absorb a constant stream of such persons from the rural areas with little or no gain in total population.

Because so little of Mark's story takes place in the urban areas, we are not surprised that this group plays an insignificant role in the overall story. In fact, there is only one such person here who can be clearly identified. The widow in 12:42 is being unwittingly victimized by the redistributive economic system of the temple (Wright 1982: 256–265).

Degraded, unclean, and expendables

Outside the walls of every ancient city lived the outcasts: beggars, prostitutes, itinerant day laborers, tanners, peddlers, bandits, sailors, gamblers, ass drivers, usurers, dung collectors, and even some merchants (Figure 8.7). They were present in both villages and cities, though much more numerous in the latter. All such persons were forced out of the cities at night when the gates were locked, but frequented the cities during the daytime to beg or find work. While not a large portion of the total population, one encountered these people everywhere. The living conditions and life chances of most of them were appalling.

Here we meet a surprise. Though outcasts were a relatively small percentage of the total population, there are 22 references to them in Mark's story. Eight times Mark gives us a summary of Jesus' interaction with them (1:28, 32–34, 45; 3:7–10; 6:31–34, 54–56; 7:36–37). Moreover, Mark wants us to know early on in his story that Jesus' healing activity among this group of people is a major reason for the reputation he develops (1:28). Two of those listed above, swineherds and porters, practiced despised occupations. The Syro-Phoenician woman may originally have been a person of higher status, though with a daughter afflicted by an unclean spirit villagers probably considered her a social deviant or perhaps even dangerous (Theissen 1984).

Urban Poor in Mark

Those buying in the temple (likely includes peasants) 11:15

Crowd/People 1:5; 11:18, 32; 12:12, 37, 41; 14:2, 43; 15:8, 11, 15

Widow 12:42

Figure 8.6 Urban poor in Mark

Outcasts Mentioned in Mark

Man with an unclean spirit 1:23	Syro-Phoneocian woman and daughter
The sick and demon possessed 1:32–34,	7:25, 26
39; 6:5, 13, 55; 9:38	Deaf man with speech impediment
Leper 1:40	Blind man 8:22
Paralytic 2:3	7:32
Man with withered hand 3:1	Boy with an unclean spirit 9:14
Those who have nothing 4:25	Blind Bartimaeus 10:46
Demoniac 5:2	Simon the Leper 14:3
Hemorrhaging woman 5:25	Swineherds 5:14
	Man carrying a jar 14:13

Figure 8.7 Outcasts in Mark

Rural peasants and other villagers

In agrarian societies 85 percent of the population lived in villages and were engaged in farming or extracting raw materials. They included freeholding peasants, tenant farmers, day laborers, slaves, and the various landless groups such as fishermen, artisans, and other craftsmen (Figure 8.8).

While estimating standards of living for freeholding peasants has proven a difficult task, there is little doubt that minimal survival levels were common. Yields were both low and unstable (Oakman 1986: 26), hence peasant debt leading to loss of land was widespread (Goodman 1982: 417–427; Oakman 1986: 57; Horsley 1989: 88–90; Fiensy 1991: 93). Aristocratic control of major portions of the arable land is well documented for the period following the revolt of 66 CE. On much of the land, therefore, absentee landowners were forced to employ tenant farmers, landless laborers, and slaves in producing their crops. (Fiensy 1991: 75–85). They often turned to cash-crops such as grapes rather than stick with subsistence crops like wheat and barley. Rents for tenants could go as high as two-thirds of a crop, though rabbinic sources more commonly mention figures ranging from one-fourth to one-half. While day laborers and slaves were often employed during the off season as cooks, messengers, scribes, manure gatherers, barbers, thorn gatherers, or building workers (Fiensy 1991: 86), they did much of the field work for large landowners during planting and harvest seasons. Of course, anyone without land of their own was near the bottom of the social-economic scale.

In addition to those already mentioned, most village and rural areas contained at least several other groups. Lower level retainers and lay aristocrats often provided village leadership. Artisans, craftsmen,

fishermen, and herders were common as well, though few artisans or craftsmen could make a living in the smaller villages and thereby had to work in several locations. Because they lacked land or status, artisans usually had no means of making advantageous marriages, and family continuity was therefore somewhat precarious. It is of course among this last group that we must locate Jesus. The gospels call Jesus a *tekton* in Greek. It is usually translated 'carpenter,' but it could refer to any kind of worker in metal or wood. Legend has it that the family of Jesus made the yokes for oxen, which if true would place them among the poorest of the poor.

For all of these rural groups life was always at the margins of sustainability. In addition, fraud, robbery, forced imprisonment or labor, beatings, inheritance disputes, and forcible removal of rents were common. There are 15 reports or stories of violence in the Gospel of Mark alone (1:14, 45; 3:6, 27; 5:3; 6:16–28; 10:33–34; 12:1–8, 40, 41–44; 13:9–13; 14:1, 43–48; 15:7, 15–20). Widows, aged parents without children, or parents of abnormal children, the very young, the very old, those with diseases or deformities, and those without land were the most common victims. Suspicion of outsiders, fear and distrust of literate officials, and hatred of anyone who threatened subsistence were the social constants of ancient village life. In sum, poor housing, non-existent sanitation, constant violence, economically inaccessible medical care, and bad diet—as much as one-fourth of a male Palestinian peasant's calorie intake came from alcohol (Broshi 1989: 41–56)—leave us a long way from the world of the urban elite.

As one might expect, these various groups of rural persons, which were the overwhelming bulk of the population in ancient societies, are prominent throughout the story world of Mark.

Note the frequent mentions of the 'crowd' in the list below (Greek: *ochlos*; used 38 times in Mark, translated variously by the NRSV). It is Mark's equivalent for *'am ha' aretz:* those poor uneducated peasants outside the law. It may also be an indicator of the social location of his own audience (Ahn Byung-mu 1981: 139 ff.; also Myers: 156). The rabbis of course taught that observant Jews should neither eat nor travel with the *'am ha' aretz* though the Jesus of Mark did both (e.g., 2:13 ff; 8:1 ff.). Those on the list from the Judean countryside (1:5), the sower (4:5), the tenants (12:1),

Peasants or Villagers in Mark

Those from the Judean countryside 1:5
Peter, Andrew 1:16
James, John, Zebedee 1:19–20
Simon's mother-in-law 1:30
Jesus 6:3
Mary 6:3
James, Joses, Judas, Simon and Jesus' sisters 6:3
Seed scatterer 4:26
Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James
Joses, Salome 15:40

Little ones 9:42
Children 10:13
Bystanders in Bethphage 11:5
Those buying in the temple (likely included
urban poor as well) 11:15
Tenants 12:1
Sower 4:3
Simon of Cyrene 15:21
Crowd 2:4, 13; 3:9, 20, 32; 4:1, 36; 5:21, 24, 27,
30, 31; 6:14, 17, 34, 39, 45; 7:14, 17, 33;
8:1; 2, 6, 34; 9:14, 15, 17, 25; 10:1, 46

Figure 8.8 Peasants or villagers in Mark

the crowd (*passim*), and most of the other rural persons listed above were probably peasant farmers. As noted above, Jesus and his family were artisans. Though Mark does not mention the Bethlehem tradition, if Jesus' family was originally Judean we can assume that a predecessor there lost the land or they would not be trying to make a living in a tiny Galilean village.

Mark's story of Jesus

In looking over the five lists of characters in Mark cited above, we can safely say that his story world (which may or may not coincide with the real world) genuinely re-creates the sharply stratified agrarian society. Moreover, having described this world, we are now in a position to ask our primary questions. At whom is this story pitched? What would make it convincing? With whom is Mark intending linguistic convergence? With whom is linguistic divergence a likely possibility? And finally, from the vantage point of our chosen social location, stratification, what would make this story compelling?

It is not difficult to detect a certain defensiveness on Mark's part as he tells the story of Jesus' conflicts with the elite. His Jesus repeatedly disregards the ritual standards to which the elite conformed as Israelites. He violates purity rules regarding persons (1:41; 2:13–14; 4:35–42; 5:24–28; 5:41; 7:24–30; 7:31) by coming in contact with the diseased, the dead, the malformed, and the possessed. He violates rules about the body (7:33; 8:23), about meal practice (6:37–44; 8:1–10), about times (2:24; 3:1–6), and about places (11:15–16; 12:33). Opponents admit Jesus' power, but (3:22–27) claim it has its origin in Satan. Demons, however, designate Jesus the 'Holy One of God' (1:24).

Mark's defense of Jesus is a spirited one. In both the baptism (1:10–11) and transfiguration (9:2–8) scenes, God acknowledges nothing less than kinship with Jesus. Mark also claims that the Scriptures offer justification (2:25–26; 7:6; 10:5; 11:17) for Jesus' actions—even though others judge them to be purity violations. He also quotes Jesus' saying that evil comes from inside the human heart rather than anything contacting the body from outside (7:18–23).

Of course, comments about such purity issues in Mark have long since become a scholarly commonplace. Nonetheless, they frequently overlook a critical fact of *peasant* life: Jesus may have been seen as unholy and unwashed by the religious elite, and his behavior may have seemed to them iconoclastic or even perverse, but to a peasant it would have been nothing out of the ordinary at all. Most peasants could not maintain the Great Tradition even if they had wanted to. They came in constant contact with bodily secretions, dead animals, and unwashed food. Farming practices could

Figure 8.9 Ancient stone olive press. The name Gethsemane meant 'oil press' in Aramaic. Photo Richard L. Rohrbaugh

not await Sabbaths and holy days: in dry-land farming with marginal or uneven rainfall, each day that passes between the first rains and plowing reduces the final yields. Neither could they always afford the prescribed sacrifices or guarantee the cleanliness of meal companions.

We must point out therefore that the rules the Markan Jesus breaks having to do with dietary laws, washing, Sabbath observance, and temple sacrifice were most often those which peasants had the most difficulty keeping. Jesus' lifestyle would thus have been familiar to peasants in every respect. His defense of an internal purity rather than the externals of ritual practice might well have shocked them. But his lifestyle as such would not. Mark's argument is thus clear: purity before God is possible within the limits of a peasant way of life. And obviously a key point in relation to Mark's strategy is that in constructing his defense for Jesus, he is also defending his own community (Myers 1994: 35–36).

The conclusion we can draw from all this is that in telling the story of Jesus to rural villagers, Mark is telling them the story of one of their own kind. The story-Jesus and the readers come from the same social stratum. They occupy the same social location. As a rhetorical strategy this is a classic example of linguistic convergence. By locating his Jesus in the same social space as that occupied by the reader, Mark gains the reader's sympathy. He attracts and persuades. A story of this type might have had little appeal to a member of the urban elite (linguistic divergence), but it would have been both heartening and persuasive to villagers. They would learn from it that Jesus did what they usually could not do: resist the elite, practice incomplete observance of Torah, and yet claim the protection and care of God.

Alternative stories of Jesus

It is assumed by most New Testament scholars that Matthew and Luke are revisions of Mark; hence we can assume that in one way or another they found Mark inadequate for social interaction with their particular audiences. Yet surprisingly they do not change the fundamental nature or structure of the Markan story. In fact, if we were to list the characters in these two alternative gospels on our charts of the agrarian society, the results would not differ much from those for Mark. The story remains substantially one of Jesus' ministry to the poor of the rural areas along with his conflict with the urban elite or their retainers.

Both Matthew and Luke, however, have a problem. Their audiences are quite different than Mark's. Matthew's community, for example, has been described as a scribal brotherhood, and indeed many commentators have seen Matt. 13:52 ('a scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven') as referring to the scribal status of the author himself (Overman 1990; Duling 1995).[9] If this is so, Matthew, and perhaps many of his readers, are in the retainer class. It is also clear that Luke writes for an audience higher on the scale than Mark's. He dedicates his Gospel to an elite patron, Theophilus (Robbins 1991; Alexander 1993). Moreover, his criticism of the rich makes clear that they are included in his audience (Karris 1978; Esler 1987: 164–200). In addition, Matthew and Luke were probably urbanites. As is often noted, Mark tells us that Jesus cannot go openly into a city [1:45], yet Matthew and Luke often locate him there.[10]

This means Matthew and Luke had different readers with whom to create linguistic and social convergence. It also means that they needed different rhetorical strategies if they were to persuade. Elite attitudes toward peasants in antiquity ranged from incomprehension and ignorance to suspicion and contempt. Village artisans, even admirable village artisans, were unlikely to inspire imitation. This meant that Mark's version of the Jesus story would have had little appeal to the audiences of Matthew and Luke; in fact, it would more likely have created linguistic divergence than sympathy and belief. We are not surprised, therefore, to find Matthew and Luke amending Mark's rhetorical strategy. A brief consideration of the core social value of Mediterranean antiquity makes clear why this was necessary.

Honor and shame

The core value of the Mediterranean society of the first century was honor. As Philo puts it, honor is that with which 'the majority of mankind are busy' (*Det.*, 122). He claims that in Israel the title 'elder' goes not to the aged but to the honorable (*Sob*, 16). The body itself is protected by honor (*Conf*, 18), and people will sacrifice the well-being of their own children to gain it (*Abr*, 184). Aulus Gellius argues that serious punishment is justified in order to protect the honor of an offended party (*Attic Nights* 7.14.2–4). Plutarch acknowledges that the want of honor is deeply painful (*Non Posse*, 1100).

The language of honor is likewise pervasive in the New Testament: *timē* (John 4:44; Rom. 2:7; 2:10; 9:21; 12:10; 1 Cor. 12:23; 1 Thess. 4:4; 1 Tim. 1:17; 5:17; 6:1; 2 Tim. 2:20; Heb. 2:7; 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:7; 2 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 4:9; 4:11; 5:12; 19:1; 21:26), *timāo* (Matt. 15:8; John 5:23; Acts 28:10), *entimos* (Luke 14:8), *doxa* (John 5:41; 2 Cor. 6:8; Rev. 19:7), *doxadzō* (John 8:54; 1 Cor. 12:26), *endoxos* (1 Cor. 4:10), *timios* (Heb. 13:4); and for dishonor: *atimos* (Matt. 13:57; 1 Cor. 12:23).[11]

Very simply, honor was the status one claimed in the community, together with the all-important public recognition of that claim. Honor thus served as the key indicator of social standing and enabled persons to interact with social superiors, equals, and inferiors in socially approved fashion. Herodotus provides an interesting example:

> When they meet each other in the streets, you may know if the persons meeting are of equal rank by the following token: if they are, instead of speaking, they kiss each other on the lips. In the case where one is a little inferior to the other, the kiss is given on the cheek; where the difference of rank is great, the inferior prostrates himself upon the ground.
>
> (History, *1.134)*

It is important to recognize that honor could be either ascribed or acquired. *Ascribed* honor derived from birth. Being born into an honorable family automatically made one honorable in the eyes of the entire community. The status thus gained was given or 'ascribed.' Because ascribed honor derived from birth, all members of the family, both male and female, were at roughly the same honor level.

By contrast, *acquired* honor was a matter of virtue. It was an achievement, a publicly acknowledged worthiness. Most of the gains or losses of honor were small and came as a result of normal daily interaction with others. Moreover, whatever gains one hoped to realize had to take place *in public* because the whole community had to acknowledge a gain in order to validate it. Above all, to claim honor the community did not recognize was to play the fool.

The honor of one's family had enormous consequences for daily living. It determined potential marriage partners, with whom one could do business, what functions could be attended, where one could live, and even the seating arrangements at a dinner party (Plutarch, *Moralia*, Table-Talk I, 2, VIII: 615D). Honor also legitimated authority, determining who talked and who listened. Moreover, since honor was a limited good, if one person gained honor, someone else always lost.[12] Envy was thus institutionalized and subjected anyone seeking to outdo his neighbors to hostile gossip and the pressure to share.

Moving Jesus up the scale

Concern for the honor of Jesus had significant implications for the rhetorical strategies of Matthew and Luke. In fact, Mark's village artisan Jesus (6:3) was so low on the honor scale (see the place of artisans in the diagram above), that in telling his story both Matthew and Luke needed to take dramatic action. How could they gain a sympathetic hearing for an illiterate village artisan among a literate, urban audience?[13] In their worlds, an artisan from a village like Nazareth was the kind of person who should be listening, not speaking.

The strategy both Matthew and Luke follow is to move Jesus as far up the honor scale as possible, thereby making him worthy of attention from those in their upscale audiences. Moreover, attempting to do this they had two basic options. One would be to address the *ascribed* honor status of Jesus, the other to address his *acquired* honor status. Elite audiences of course would expect ascribed and acquired honor to go hand in hand; hence in order to leave no doubt about the matter, Matthew and Luke actually make bold use of both options. Given the limits of space, however, we cannot describe these strategies comprehensively. Instead, we shall concentrate on illustrating one option with each author. We shall describe Matthew's arguments about Jesus' *ascribed* honor and Luke's regarding his *acquired* honor. Each is a key strategy in the respective author's strategy of persuasion.

Matthew

Let us look first at ascribed honor in the Gospel of Matthew. We have already suggested that this Gospel was written for people higher on the socio-economic scale than the readers of Mark and that both author and audience were probably urbanites (Wire 1991: 115–16).[14] Our argument is therefore that the level of Matthew's audience made it necessary for him to develop a different rhetorical strategy. But to catch the import of the particular strategy Matthew chooses we must pause for a brief look at the instructions offered in the ancient rhetorical schools for those who learned to write in Greek.

Greek handbooks called *progymnasmata* provided exercises in which students were taught to organize their remarks around a series of conventional topics (Kennedy 1994). For example, when writing an encomium (a speech or work in praise of someone), Hermogenes instructs his students to begin with the subject's origin and birth. They are to speak of 'race, as the Greek, a city, as Athens, a family as the Alcmaeonidae.' Next, they are told to describe 'what marvelous things befell at birth, as dreams or signs or the like' (cited by Malina and Neyrey 1996: 223, who quote Spengel, *Rhetores Graeci*, II.14.8–15.5).

This of course is exactly what Matthew does in his story of Jesus' origins. First, he gives Jesus a *royal* genealogy, harking back to the most honored ancestors of Israel: Abraham and David. Since ascribed honor comes from lineage, this is a brazen honor claim indeed. Moreover, it should be seen for exactly what it is in terms of social location: Matthew has just moved Jesus from one end of the social spectrum to the other. He has located him far above the status of village artisan. Note that in 13:55 when Jesus is challenged and insulted in his hometown of Nazareth, those who took offence at him did so by bringing up (1) his status as village artisan and (2) his genealogy. But having read the genealogy Matthew provides, the reader already knows differently.

The importance of genealogies is easy for modern readers to underestimate. In antiquity, lineage was not only a source of pride but also a device for self-aggrandizement (Rohrbaugh 2014). It was a claim to authority, to place, to political or civil rights, various social roles, or even the right to speak. Since genealogies justified privilege (office, inheritance, civil, political, and economic roles), they also were subject to considerable manipulation. Plutarch tells of a group of writers ingratiating themselves with noble Roman families by producing fictitious genealogies showing descent from Numa Pompilius (*Numa*. 21.2). To have a written pedigree, and especially a long one, was a mark of honor. It established social status (ascribed honor) and thereby provided the all-important map for proper social interaction (Rohrbaugh 2014: 315–323).

As recommended by Hermogenes, Matthew next tells of the 'marvelous things' which occurred at Jesus' birth. There are dreams (1:20; 2:12, 13, 19), astronomical phenomena (2:2, 10), angelic appearances (1:20), and even attending astrologers with wonderful gifts (2:1, 11). Quintilian also tells rhetorical students to note things that happened prior to the birth such as prophecies 'foretelling future greatness' (*Inst. Orat.* 3.7.10–18). Matthew provides these as well (1:23; 2:6).

According to the *progymnasmata* of Menander Rhetor, one of the first things the writer of an encomium should do is praise the city from which the subject comes, because honor is ascribed to those born in an honorable city (*Treatise* II 369.17–370.10). To pull this one off, however,

Figure 8.10 Loaves and fishes from the mosaic floor of the ancient church at Tabhga, near Capernaum (Matt. 14:13–21). Photo Richard L. Rohrbaugh

Matthew had to resort to some deft literary gymnastics. When he quotes the prophet Micah regarding Bethlehem, he turns Micah's meaning around completely. Micah had called Bethlehem 'one of the little clans of Judah' (5:1). In Matthew that becomes:

> And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
> are by no means least among the *rulers* of Judah;
> for from you shall come a ruler
> who will govern my people Israel (Matt 5:6).[15]

In this way, Matthew tells of a Jesus who comes from a royal city, has royal ancestors, and is to be a ruler of Israel. For the Jesus who started as a village artisan in Mark, the entire social spectrum has been traversed.

Whether Matthew was acquainted with the instructions of the *progymnasmata* may be debated, but the impact of this strategy among those literate in Greek is beyond question. The retainer class especially was quick to take note of stories about royalty precisely because they were dependent upon this group for their place in the system. With stories of a royal Jesus, therefore, Matthew displays yet another classic example of linguistic convergence with a particular audience.

Luke

Our argument thus far has been that Matthew's social interaction with his audience made an honorific Jesus necessary. When we come to the Gospel of Luke, we are not surprised to see this same strategy at work. In the birth narrative Luke also moves Jesus up the social scale by means of an honorific genealogy, though here the claims are even more exaggerated.[16] To Luke, Jesus is not simply son of Abraham, son of David, he is son of God.

Yet in thinking about Luke's attempt to develop a persuasive argument, we shall not repeat the focus on ascribed honor. A different illustration is valuable in order to understand the broader issue of how gospel writers used rhetorical strategies which depend upon an understanding of the social system shared with readers. So this time let us address Luke's claims about Jesus' *acquired* honor.

In order to do this, we shall begin with comments on Luke's preface (1:1–4) precisely because it tells us so much about the location of Luke himself. If we know Luke's place, we can then answer the question about whether he is writing 'up' or 'down' to his particular audience. We will also be able to tell in what way the social location of the Jesus in his story would or would not be convincing.

A preface was a formal literary convention in antiquity, though Luke's preface is unique in the New Testament. In it he tells us about his decision to write, the reasons for it, and what he hopes to accomplish. Most importantly, he addresses the writing to an individual named Theophilus.

Such a beginning virtually begs comparison with other Greek writings of the time, and indeed recent research by Loveday Alexander has done just that. She has demonstrated a striking similarity between Luke's beginning and those of what she calls the 'technical writers' of the period. These were writers who composed works intended to be factually informative (Alexander 1986, 1993). Their writing is 'literate, but not literary.' It is not the classic prose of the literati, but neither is it the vernacular Koine of the papyri. It is 'middlebrow' writing ('*Zwischenprosa*') that is the work of someone who is not among the elite, but perhaps writes for them (Alexander 1993: 61).

Such writing typically comes from 'slaves or freedmen in great households, Greeks in Roman society, men obliged to support themselves by the exercise of their profession' (1993: 70). Unlike the literati, writers at this level do not evidence the typical elite Greek disdain for those who work with their hands, hence Alexander notes that Luke mentions Paul's tent-making 'in a totally matter-of-fact fashion in Acts 18:13' (1993: 70). Such writers in fact were very much like what Wayne Meeks calls the 'typical' urban Christian: a variety of free artisans and small traders (1982: 270, 1983: ch. 2). In the terms we have been using, such persons were located in the lower echelons of the retainer class and the upper levels of the urban non-elite.

Especially important in the preface is the fact that Luke addresses his Gospel to 'most excellent' Theophilus. Such addresses are common in literature produced for elite patrons. Josephus, for example, addresses his efforts to his patron, 'most excellent' Epaphroditus (preface to *Antiquities* 1.8; *Life* 430; *Against Apion* 1.1). Yet Josephus himself was hardly among the elite. Z. Yavetz locates him low in the royal entourage, 'in the same category as doctors, magicians, philosophers and buffoons' (1975: 432). Alexander places him at this same location (1986: 50). Both Josephus and Luke are thus writing for someone above them.[17]

Vernon Robbins has also characterized Luke as someone who is writing 'up' (1991: 323). That is, he writes as if to someone who is above him rather than in a position of equality (1991: 321). In fact, he addresses his patron the same way subordinates address superiors elsewhere in the book of Acts (23:26; 24:2, 24). The preface, therefore, tells us much about Luke's own social location and perhaps also about the social dynamics between author and addressee. The audience of Luke is perhaps the urban elite of which Theophilus would be typical.[18] The author himself is at neither end of the social spectrum. He is not among those who 'disdain the artisan class,' but neither does he think like 'the daily workers in the mines, fields, vineyards, or hillside grazing sheep and goats' (Robbins 1991: 320). Thus Luke may well have been a lower level retainer, perhaps even a slave or freedman in a great house, who wrote an orderly account for a patron above him.

If this is correct, we are in a position to ask: What does Luke do to make Jesus compelling to readers like Theophilus? How does he go about trying to create linguistic convergence? You will recall our comment earlier that honor claims had to be publicly acknowledged or the claimant had indeed played the fool. Thus when Luke offers a highly honorific genealogy for Jesus, he has made an honor claim which begged public recognition. That would be especially true for an audience like Theophilus, because people in his position paid attention only to publicly acknowledged honorific persons.

It is at this point that Luke offers the reader repeated assurances that Jesus is gaining the necessary public recognition. Acquired honor accrues to Jesus throughout the story. It also turns out to be a

key element in Luke's persuasive strategy. No doubt the frequency with which Luke reports public acknowledgment of Jesus' honor seems unnecessary to modern readers who usually pass over such notices without a second glance. But these reports would have been the vitally important public confirmation ancient readers expected.

The number of times Luke reports public praise of Jesus is truly amazing.[19] Simeon praises the child in the temple (2:25–35). Anna does the same to all who will listen (2:38). His parents are amazed at his understanding (2:47). Luke tells us he increased in (divine and) human favor (2:52). John the Baptist publicly places Jesus higher than himself on the honor scale (3:16). A divine voice praises him and acknowledges his genealogy (3:22). The gossip network spreads his fame in the surrounding country and he is praised by everyone (4:14–15). All are amazed at him in the synagogue of Nazareth (4:22). In Capernaum they are astounded at his teaching (4:32) and his power over demons (4:36). Reports of him reach every place in the region (4:37). Word of his healing spreads abroad (5:15). He amazes onlookers by healing a paralytic and everyone is filled with awe (5:26). His reputation even reaches a high ranking Roman officer (7:3). After raising the son of the widow of Nain, Jesus is praised as a prophet (7:16), and his fame spreads throughout the region (7:17).

In 7:18, the reputation of Jesus reaches John the Baptist who sends disciples to inquire. They are asked to report what they have seen and heard (7:22). After Jesus forgives a woman of the city, those at the table with him are taken aback by what they have witnessed (7:49). His disciples acknowledge that he commands even the wind and water (8:25).

When Jesus heals a demoniac in the country of the Gerasenes, the swineherds tell everyone and the report spreads fear in the area (8:37). Jairus, a member of the elite, falls at Jesus' feet (a gesture of inferiority) to beg for his daughter's life. When she is healed, he is 'astounded' (8:56).

Figure 8.11 A Roman milestone on the Via Maris (Road to the Sea). One branch ran from Capernaum, south through Tiberius to the Plain of Esdraelon, and then west to the Mediterranean. Photo Richard L. Rohrbaugh

Luke reports that the reputation of Jesus even reaches the royal court (9:9). The crowds near Bethsaida also hear of him (9:11). Divine approval in the hearing of his disciples is again given to Jesus on the mountain (9:35). A great crowd is astounded at the healing of an epileptic boy, and indeed at everything he was doing (9:43). In 10:17, even demons submit to his name (honor, reputation). Later, when Jesus is casting a demon out of a mute person, the crowd is again amazed (11:14), though opponents look for an alternate explanation for what is happening (11:15). In 11:27, a woman publicly praises Jesus' mother (hence Jesus by implication) by calling her 'honored.'

Luke's hyperbole in 12:1 ('thousands,' 'trampled one another') implies a growing reputation as well. Later, in 13:17, we are told that Jesus' enemies have been 'put to shame' while the entire crowd rejoices at what he does. 'All' the people praise him when he heals a beggar in 18:43. When Jesus rides into Jerusalem to the praise of the disciples, Pharisees ask Jesus to quiet them. But Jesus replies that even the stones would cry out if the crowd did not (19:40). Later, when he teaches in the temple, we are told that the people were 'spellbound' by what they heard (19:48). Having decisively confounded those who publicly challenge him over payment of taxes, the narrator reports that even his opponents were amazed (20:26). And finally, in 21:38 we are told that people will even get up early in the morning just to listen to him in the temple.

Given the fact that all of these notices are *constructed by the narrator*, it is safe to say that concern for acquired honor, for *public* reputation, is critical to Luke's rhetorical strategy (of the 37 examples cited above, Luke has added 22 to Mark's story). Would a modern writer write this way? Unlikely. Would an ancient Mediterranean writer? Yes, indeed, if writing 'up'—that is, if writing for someone above himself in the social order, someone he knows will view *public* reputation as the justification for any claims the story makes.

Once again, therefore, we have seen a gospel writer relocate Jesus in order to make him palatable to the intended audience. By stressing the acquired honor of Jesus, Luke makes him worthy of Theophilus' attention. The social location of Jesus has once again been used as a strategy to create linguistic convergence.

Figure 8.12 Later synagogue at Capernaum, built over an earlier structure Jesus may have frequented (Luke 4:31–37). Photo Richard L. Rohrbaugh

John

When we come to the Gospel of John, we enter a different world. That is true not only in terms of the Gospel's content, but also in terms of its social location and rhetorical strategy. It does not emerge from the rural peasant world in the same way Mark does. Neither is it from the sophisticated urban worlds of Matthew and Luke. Jesus in the Gospel of John displays neither special identification with the poor nor the high level of honor worthy of elite urban readers. Something else drives John's unique portrait of Jesus.

John is almost certainly a Galilean gospel recounting the Jesus story for a mixed (Galilean, Samaritan, Gentile) community of Jesus' followers. Moreover, this community was likely what sociolinguist M. A. K. Halliday calls an 'anti-society,' that is, a group which exists within a dominant society but as a 'conscious alternative to it' (Halliday 1976: 570).[20] It was an alienated group which had been pushed (or withdrawn) to the social margins where it stood as a protest to the values of the larger society (Rohrbaugh 2004).

The scope and depth of this alienation is evident in the language of the Gospel itself. John's Jesus says to his disciples:

> If the world (the dominant society) hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you.
>
> *(15:18–19; the same sentiment is repeated in the later correspondence in the community in 1 John 3:13)*

Figure 8.13 Jacob's Well, at a shrine near Schechem commemorating Jesus' encounter with the woman in John 4. Photo Richard L. Rohrbaugh

Later, Jesus repeats the sentiment. The disciples, he says, 'do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world' (17:14; repeated in 17:16). They are in the world, but offer it no loyalty or love. 'In the world you will face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!' (16:33).

This is tough talk. Yet it accurately conveys the temper of the group's relations with outsiders. As the story makes clear, the hostility of the group was especially aimed at Judeans. The Johannine group saw the larger Judean society as hostile to Jesus and therefore hostile to themselves. John's Jesus calls Judeans children of the devil (8:44), and they respond by claiming he is either a Samaritan or possessed by demons (8:48). Obviously, this is a group whose relations with the dominant society have gone sour.

It is in the midst of this social conflict that John locates Jesus. Like the Johannine community, Jesus is hated by the dominant society. Like Mark, John defends Jesus vigorously (attacking his opponents with equal vigor). But in doing so he makes a claim quite unlike anything in the Synoptics. There is no attempt here to locate Jesus next to the rural poor. Neither is there a move to push him up the scale of honor. Unashamedly, almost defiantly, John admits that Jesus is nothing.

The key issue in John is where Jesus is 'from.' We have already seen the importance of birth/origin because it determined honor, stature, public legitimacy, and authority. In the instructions of the *progynasmata*, we were told to pay great attention to birthplace because great people are born in great places. Obviously obscure Galilean villages like Nazareth would not qualify (John has no Bethlehem tradition). As Nathanael puts it, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' (1:46; see also 7:52). Jesus cannot be counted as honorific on the basis of origin.

Jews/Judeans

In most English translations of John's Gospel we consistently encounter the unfortunate and incorrect translation 'Jews' (Greek: *Ioudaioi*). Contemporary meanings ascribed to the word 'Jew' come from much later medieval and even 20th century usage. Such modern connotations of 'Jew' or 'Jewishness' are absent from John's Gospel, hence it is simply inappropriate to project them into the text via faulty translation.

In John the Greek word *Ioudaios* means simply and only 'Judean.' Judea is precisely a place -- with its environs, air and water. 'Judean' thus designates a person from one segment of a larger ethnic group, 'Israel' (John 1:47,49), who comes from the place after which the segment is named, 'Judea' (*Ioudaia*). The correlatives of 'Judean' in John are 'Galilean' and 'Perean', and together they make up the whole of Israel. Israelites living in the homeland often made these finer distinctions, but outsiders usually did not. Thus in the parlance of the larger Greco-Roman world the whole region was simply known as 'Judea' and anyone with that homeland was called 'Judean' no matter where in the empire they might be living. The opposite of Israel is non-Israel, the nations other than Israel, or simply, 'the nations.'

The term *Ioudaios* (Judean) appears 70 times in John. It is used only 5 times in Matthew, 6 times in Mark and 5 times in Luke. This striking contrast between John and the Synoptics, makes understanding the term critically important.

Figure 8.14 Jew/Judean

John is aware of this. In John 7, while Jesus is at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, in the midst of a tense and potentially dangerous situation, a dispute arises in the crowd about whether Jesus might be the Messiah. Then someone in the crowd shouts, 'We know where this man is *from*.' Implication: he comes from a place of no account, hence could not be the Messiah. Another speaker puts it squarely: 'Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee does he?' A third speaker reminds everyone that the Scripture foretells a Messiah from Bethlehem, from the house of David the king. The result is chaos and a near arrest.

It is right in the midst of all this that John's Jesus *openly* admits that his origin qualifies him for nothing. 'You know me, and you know where I am *from*' (7:28). But he then makes one of the central claims in all of the Gospel of John: 'I have not come on my own . . . but the one who sent me is true.' Granted Jesus' biological origins are nothing, but in John's eyes they are irrelevant because Jesus does not come in his own name.

Figure 8.15 Excavation at the Pool of Bethzatha. Jesus healed a man who had been there 38 years (John 5:2–18). Photo Richard L. Rohrbaugh

Note that *43 times* in John we are told that Jesus was 'sent' by God. This is language that appears only twice in Matthew (10:40; 15:24), once in Mark (9:37), four times in Luke (4:18, 43; 9:48; 10:16) and once in Paul (Rom. 8:3). But for John, this assertion that Jesus has been sent by someone higher (God) is the entire basis for his claim on people's attention. Jesus' place of origin is irrelevant because *he claims absolutely nothing on his own*. The relevant authority is the one who sent him.

The importance of this language about being 'sent' can be seen in another way. In antiquity, the 'sent' messenger was one who came from a patron, a person of unquestioned stature and authority. As broker, the messenger's only claim to fame was access to the patron, nothing more. He simply acted as an intermediary between the patron and those for whom the patron's message or largesse was intended. This broker role is the one Jesus plays throughout John's Gospel. Note that eight times we are reminded that Jesus will return to his patron (7:33; 13:1; 14:12, 28; 16:5, 10, 17, 28), suggesting that the broker has ready access to and from the patron who sent him.

Readers of John's Gospel will not find it difficult to sense a certain defensive tone about all this. The sheer repetition of the claim that Jesus was 'sent' is part of it. But so also are statements like:

> The Father who has sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form, and you do not have his word abiding in you, because you do not believe him whom he has sent.
>
> *(5:37–38)*

Later Jesus prays that 'the world may know that you have sent me' (17:23). Our argument is thus that John's claim that Jesus is 'sent' from God is intended as a defensive strategy meant to counteract the prevailing wisdom that one 'from' Nazareth could claim no public standing on his own. John agrees that Jesus has no standing, but he claims that as broker for God Jesus bears the authority of his patron.

One additional charge asserted by Jesus' Judean enemies may be added to all this. The typical instructions in the *progynasmata* remind a writer that after matters of origin and birth, the next conventional topic to be addressed when praising someone is the matter of nurture:

> Next comes 'nurture.' Was he reared in a palace? Were his swaddling clothes robes of purple? Was he from his first growth brought up in the lap of royalty? Or, instead, was he raised up to be emperor as a young man by some felicitous chance? If he does not have any distinguished nurture (as Achilles had with Chiron), discuss his education, observing here: 'In addition to what has been said, I wish to describe the quality of his mind.' Then you must speak of his love of learning, his quickness, his enthusiasm for study, his easy grasp of what is taught him. If he excels in literature, philosophy, and knowledge of letters, you must praise this.
>
> *(Menander Rhetor* Treatise *II 371.17–372.2)*

John's Jesus would not qualify on this score either. In 7:15, in the midst of the heated dispute in the temple, an early challenge is raised by someone in the crowd: 'How does this man have such learning, when he has never been taught?' Jesus had neither the proper origin nor the proper nurture/education. But once again Jesus' reply is typical of the strategy throughout the Gospel of John: 'My teaching is not mine but his who sent me' (7:16). It is as if the writer knows he can make no claims for Jesus that will stand up before either his Judean opponents or potential readers of the account. His recourse is thus to claim that Jesus was sent by God, speaks for God, speaks the words of God, and makes no claim of his own for either his origin or his teaching.

In sum, unlike Mark who simply recognizes Jesus as a rural peasant similar to his own audience, or Matthew and Luke who feel it necessary to move Jesus up the scale of honor to appeal to elite audiences, John's strategy is unique. He makes no claim for Jesus whatsoever. Everything ultimately comes from God; Jesus is simply the broker whom God has sent to speak on his behalf.

Later correspondence in the Johannine community

Before we leave the Johannine community, it is worth taking note of one additional feature of its language which will help us move beyond the Gospel and into the letters of 1, 2, and 3 John. Introversionist or anti-societal groups tend to produce language designed to foster close personal relationships among group insiders.[21] They do so as a means of reinforcing group solidarity in the face of hostility from the outside. It is thus no accident that the Gospel of John is filled with *dialogues*: the language of close, personal interaction. In other words, the many conversations of Jesus in John's Gospel are being used as part of his accommodation strategy. They help sustain close personal relations within the Johannine community itself.

This concern for close, personal relationships with Jesus and each other comes through clearly in Jesus' great prayer for his disciples: 'I ask . . . that they may all be one. As you, father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us' (17:20–21). It is also what makes the later correspondence in the Johannine community so fascinating. As fractures began to develop within the group, concern for group solidarity became increasingly intense. Readers of 1 John are reminded of the message they had heard from the beginning: 'that you should love one another' (3:11), and that 'he who loves God must love his brother also' (4:21). Those who break fellowship are excoriated in the most severe terms. 'Any one who hates a brother is a murderer.' 'If anyone says, "I love God", and hates his brother, he is a liar' (1 John 4:20; cf. John 17:21–23). The refusal of Diotrephes to receive group members and maintain group solidarity becomes especially painful (3 John 9–10).

The peculiar language of the Johannine community, then, with its concern for close personal relationships and group loyalty, together with its portrait of Jesus as the one the dominant society hated before it hated group members, all bespeak a social location of marginalization. From that precarious position, no attempt is made to finesse the lowly status of Jesus' origin or nurture. Jesus is nothing on his own. God is the source of all and God's honor is unassailable. Jesus has been 'sent' as God's broker and those who love him must follow him and stick together. That is not only the content of John's message, it is the character of his social interaction with his audience.

Conclusion

We started with the notion that language is a form of social interaction. It derives its meaning from a shared social system. We also argued that writers and speakers tend to accommodate language to their audiences in order to attain a specific social goal. They seek linguistic convergence that will gain a sympathetic hearing. Even the brief illustrations we have chosen demonstrate that to be true of the canonical gospels.

Mark accommodates his Jesus to the rural, village audience for which he writes. His Jesus story is a story in which the readers hear about themselves. Matthew and Luke accommodate their versions of the story to the urban elite. Among the many strategies they use (there are a number of others in addition to the ones we have chosen to illustrate here) is the attempt to move Jesus up the social ladder, to give him the honor status that would command attention from elite readers. John, by contrast, openly admits Jesus' lowly status and claims that any authority he has is derived from the one who sent him. Moreover, he uses the Jesus story to create and hold together the precarious personal relationships which always characterize anti-societal groups.

Each of these is a strategy to persuade. Each is an attempt at linguistic convergence. While additional rhetorical devices or persuasive strategies exist in each gospel, those we have chosen to illustrate are among the most important precisely because their persuasive power derives from one of the great realities of ancient social life: status stratification. Moreover, it should be clear to modern readers that for people like us, seeing these strategies at work is totally dependent on learning our way into the shared social system of antiquity.

Notes

1 Studies of classical rhetoric are numerous. See especially Kennedy. For its application to New Testament study, see the work by Ben Witherington 2002, 2009.
2 For a discussion of this in relation to the Gospel of John, see Malina 1994.
3 We thus intend to concentrate on what we might call a writer's 'rhetorical strategy.' By this we mean the social impact a text is designed to have upon its readers. As John Elliott has put it, 'I prefer the term "strategy" rather than "purpose" or "intention" because, as in the strategy of a game plan or the tactics of military warfare, strategy implies not simply the communication of ideas but the deliberate design of a document calculated to have a specific social effect on its intended hearers or readers' (1990: 10–11).
4 The long-standing scholarly debate about the origin of Mark's Gospel continues apace. Michael J. Kok (2015) has recently argued that in spite of the nearly unanimous patristic claim that Mark was the 'interpreter' of Peter, the Gospel gained a meagre and often mixed reception from patristic writers who thought it was too easily adapted to legitimate the claims of rival factions. He concludes that the association with Peter was a second-century move to claim ownership of the Gospel by an emergent orthodoxy.
5 A complete discussion of the concept and its usefulness to New Testament scholars can be found in my article on the topic (Rohrbaugh 1987). For its application to the Gospel of Mark, see Rohrbaugh 1993. The comments below are in large part a summary of that article.
6 There are many studies of social stratification in the agrarian societies of antiquity. Among the best are MacMullen 1974, Ste. Croix 1981, Lenski 1984, Stavenhagen 1975. On the anachronistic, but so-called scholarly 'consensus' that early Christians were middle class, see Rohrbaugh 1984. For the application of the issues involved to New Testament study, see Fiensy 1991, Oakman 2000, Hanson and Oakman 2008.
7 For the most recent and thorough case for this location see Marcus 2000.
8 As in most agrarian societies, between 1 and 3 percent of the population owned a near majority of the arable land. David Fiensy (1991) reports evidence of aristocratic estates varying from 50–2,500 acres. By contrast, he estimates the average peasant plot at six acres or less.
9 A review of the many recent studies on this matter, together with a full discussion of the Matthean community as a scribal brotherhood marginalized by those of their own social status, is offered by Duling 2012.
10 In fact, one half of the references to the city (*polis*) in the New Testament are in Luke and Acts. Matthew has the Galilean ministry in the cities (9:1; 10:5, 11, 15, 23; 11:1, 20). See Overman 1990; Rohrbaugh 1991.
11 Plutarch makes a modest attempt at exploring the semantic field of honor by commenting on Greek equivalents for the Latin term *honor*. He suggests *doxa* and *timē* as appropriate substitutes for his Greek readers (*Moralia* IV, 266). For a much more substantial semantic field, see Malina and Neyrey (1991: 46).
12 This was even true in respect to God: 'God's honour is set at naught by those who deify the mortal with honour that belongs to the imperishable' (Philo, *Ebr*, 110).
13 Whether Jesus was literate has been a matter of some debate. He is depicted as reading only in Luke (4:16), though that is likely a projection of Luke's own world onto Jesus. See Bar-Ilan (1991) contra the wildly overstated views of Shmuel Safrai (1976; also: Josephus *Contra Apion*, 2.204; *Ant*. 4.211; Philo *Ad Gaium*, 115, 210). Harris (1989) provides a comprehensive discussion of ancient literacy. See Hezer (2001) for Jewish literacy in Roman Palestine. As she makes clear, the probability that a village artisan in this period was literate is near zero.
14 A number of the chapters in Balch (1991) also deal with this matter at length.
15 Brown (1977: 184–187) provides a full discussion of the Matthew quotation. It matches neither the Hebrew (MT) nor the Greek (LXX) texts, both of which are making a point about the insignificance of Bethlehem. The few attempts to argue for textual variants rather than deliberate change are somewhat tortured and not widely accepted. What none of the discussions of this quotation to date have recognized is the *social* significance of the Matthean changes.
16 For a full discussion of this strategy in the opening chapters of Luke, see Rohrbaugh 1995.
17 In addition to Alexander, discussion of Theophilus as Luke's patron can be found in Robbins 1991.
18 Many scholars have argued this location for the audience of Luke. See Robbins 1991, Downing 1982, Kany (Braun 1986: 9, n. 5), and Rohrbaugh 1995. As far back as 1927, H. J. Cadbury argued that the Gospel of Luke represented an urban point of view.
19 Extended comment on the scope and function of gossip networks in honor-shame societies can be found in Rohrbaugh 2001.
20 For an extensive treatment of the Gospel of John as anti-language, see Petersen 1993. Unfortunately, Petersen treats anti-language as a largely literary phenomenon, leaving unacknowledged the relationship between anti-language and anti-society.
21 For a discussion of the Johannine group as an introversionist sect, see Esler 1994: 70–91.

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9

THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES

Jeffrey S. Siker

Introduction

Christianity in the second and third centuries was a time of both significant fluidity and consolidation of Christian identities all at the same time. This time period has traditionally been less studied than either the origins of Christianity in the first century or the patristic era of Christianity that reached its zenith in the fourth and fifth centuries. Indeed, the second and third centuries of Christianity are often referred to as 'post' and 'pre.' This time period is termed 'post-apostolic' or 'post-New Testament' since it comes after the formative period of first-century Christianity, after the first generation of Christians had died, after most of the New Testament writings had been composed. But second- and third-century Christianity is also termed 'pre-Constantinian' or 'ante-Nicene' since it comes before the rise to power of the emperor Constantine the Great in 306 CE and with him the beginnings of a state-established Christendom. It is referred to as 'ante-Nicene' because it comes before the first Council of Nicaea (325 CE), which was convened by Constantine and which was important in setting the course for the church thereafter.

But the second and third centuries are far more than just a muddle between the origins of Christianity in the first century and the maturing of Christianity into an imperially supported religion with developed structures and creedal statements in the fourth century and beyond. The developments of Christianity in the second and third centuries are of great significance in their own right, and should not be seen in any way as a series of blips between the time of Jesus and the apostles on the one side and the time of Constantine and Eusebius (the most eminent early church historian; *c.* 263–*c.* 339/40 CE) on the other. In part, the importance of this time period can be seen from the number of other chapters in this volume that touch directly on central developments in early Christianity that have to do principally with second- and third-century Christianity (see Chapters 12–14, 27–29, 38, 47–49).

One reason for the somewhat modest attention to Christianity in the second and third centuries has to do with the relative lack of primary sources for this period. In comparison with post-Nicene Christian writings, materials from the second and third centuries are less than abundant. For example, one widely used collection, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (published 1885–1896, and now widely available online), includes most second- and third-century Christian writings in nine volumes (with a tenth volume as an index). It includes the writings of the so-called Apostolic Fathers, the apologists (especially Justin Martyr), Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Hippolytus, Cyprian, and the New Testament Apocrypha, among others. By contrast, the collection of *Nicene*

and Post-Nicene Fathers (*NPNF*, published 1886–1900, also available online) takes 28 volumes, consisting primarily of Augustine, Jerome, and Chrysostom (fourth- to sixth-century writings), with many other voices from the period not represented.

Another reason, perhaps, for the relative lack of attention to second- and third-century Christianity is because the developments in Christianity during this time are multidirectional and not readily mapped. It is messy. Whereas the first century of Christianity, despite significant diversity, had a basic cohesion apparent in the Gospel writings or the movement of the Pauline churches, and the fourth and fifth centuries had the pressures of imperial and conciliar organizational and unifying structures, second- and third-century Christianity was immensely diverse in character, more so in many ways than what came before or what followed. There are many ebbs and flows that defy neat categorization as different forms of Christian expression emerged and changed, all shaping and contributing in dynamic ways to the complex character of the Christianities within Christianity of this era.

Separation from Judaism

One of the significant scholarly debates over the last generation has revolved around how and when to locate the formation of 'Christianity' as a separate religious movement from 'Judaism,' recognizing that neither tradition has ever been monolithic (see Lieu 1996, 2002). Some scholars argue that even to use the terms 'Christians' and 'Jews' to describe the first-century phenomena is anachronistic and inaccurate. There are certainly markers for the separation of what came to be called 'Christianity' from its Jewish heritage, mostly having to do with the fundamental shift from a religious movement within Judaism (including Jesus as a Jewish messianic figure linked to Jewish scriptures) to a religious movement comprised increasingly of Gentile believers whose identity was no longer shaped by observance of Jewish law or ritual, but by their faith in Jesus as the crucified and risen messiah, the divine Son of God. While the influx of Gentile believers clearly began in earnest already with the work of the apostle Paul in the mid first century, there is little consensus about when the 'split' occurred between Christians and their elder Jewish siblings. To what degree did the disagreements about the identity of Jesus remain an intramural fight within the bounds of Judaism (see Saldarini 1994), and when did this dispute become fundamentally extramural? The situation is complicated by the simple observation that such separation took place at different times in different places over different factors. Thus, already in the first century, Paul can establish a house-church next door to the synagogue in Corinth (if Acts 18 is to be believed). And yet in the middle of the second century, Justin Martyr can acknowledge that there are some Christ-believers who continue to observe Jewish law (*Dialogue* 47). Even in the fourth century we find John Chrysostom preaching against Christian observance of Jewish ritual and festivals (*Against the Jews*). Scholars are thus divided about what has come to be called 'the parting of the ways,' to such an extent that one volume in the debate is entitled *The Ways That Never Parted* (Becker and Reed 2003). Was the Jewish War of 66–70 the most significant marker (so Dunn 1991)? Or the Bar Kochba Revolt of 132–135 (so Wilson 1995)? Or was there an ebb and flow that simply defies any simple rhetoric of separation (so Boyarin 2004)?

It is clear, however, that what had begun as a messianic movement within the first-century Jewish world had by the second and third centuries evolved into a largely Gentile religious movement rooted in Jewish scriptures, but increasingly divorced from the Jewish people and their faith practices. If Christians in the first century could see themselves still within the larger framework of Judaism (as apparently Paul and Matthew arguably could), Christians in the second century not only moved away from Judaism, but often did so in ways that sharply rejected and repudiated Judaism (e.g., Melito of Sardis, Justin Martyr, Tertullian), even more so than did Christian writings of the first century directly engaged in the heat of polemic (e.g., in the Gospel of John).

Christians claimed the ancient heritage of Judaism for themselves by virtue of the Jewish Scriptures (and so appealed to Roman respect for antiquity) and yet characterized the Judaism of its day as an inferior and now God-forsaken religious tradition. Christians typically saw themselves as a new *genos*,

a new people, quite apart from Judaism (see New Testament antecedents in 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Cor 3:6; 5:17; and Gal 6:15). For example, the second-century Apology of Aristides argues that 'there are four classes of men in this world: Barbarians and Greeks, Jews and Christians . . . The Jews trace the origin of their race from Abraham . . . The Christians, then, trace the beginning of their religion from Jesus the Messiah' (ch. 2, *ANF* 9: 264–265). While Jews trace the genealogical origin of their people to Abraham, Aristides traces the religious origin of the Christian 'people' (*genos*) to Christ. A similar assertion can be found in the *Epistle to Diognetus*, where Christians are described as a *kainon genos*, a 'new people,' and in the apocryphal second-century writing of the *Kerygma Petrou* (the 'Preaching of Peter'), which states that 'we are Christians, who as a third race worship him [God] in a new way' (Hennecke and Schneemelcher 1990– 1992: vol. 2, 100; Elliott 1993: 22).

Portraying one's movement as 'new,' however, created problems with Roman sensibilities that valued old traditions and were suspicious of new religious groups. Even as Roman authorities initially saw the Christian movement as a sect within Judaism (e.g., Acts 18:12–17), second-century Roman authors could also view Christians as spreading a new superstition that should not be lightly tolerated. The Roman historian Tacitus characterized Christianity as 'a deadly superstition' which espoused 'hatred of the human race' (*Annals* xv.44.2–8), and Suetonius referred to Christians as 'a class of men given to a new and wicked superstition' (*Life of Nero* 16.2). It is against such charges that Christians like the apologist Justin Martyr responded as they sought respectability for Christianity in the middle of the second century. Justin's *Apology* sought to show precisely that Christianity had its basis in the ancient prophecies of the Jewish, now Christian, Scriptures (see, e.g., *1 Apol.* 31–44), and indeed that even the ancient Greek philosophers were indebted to the wisdom of Moses (*1 Apol.* 44, echoing a claim already made by Jewish apologists such as Josephus before him).

Though a 'new race,' Christians also saw themselves as the true spiritual heirs of the ancient promises made through Israel's scriptures. The foundations of these claims, of course, can be traced back to the earliest Christian writings, where the fulfillment of prophecy motif permeates the Gospel accounts and the letters of Paul. Although not all Christians of the second and third centuries appealed to the Jewish scriptures with the same vigor (for example, Ignatius of Antioch in the early second century makes very little use of scripture), a basic motif that runs throughout this period is the proof of Christian truth claims against Judaism by invoking proof-texts from the Jewish scriptures themselves. Such appeals illustrate the Christological readings of the 'Old Testament' that became commonplace in the centuries to follow.

Towards the beginning of the second century, for example, the author of the Epistle of Barnabas, arguing against the Jewish practice of ritual circumcision, stated that true circumcision is the spiritual circumcision of the Christians and not the false physical circumcision of the Jews. To prove his point Barnabas appealed to the story of Abraham having his household circumcised from Genesis 17. According to Barnabas, Abraham 'did so looking forward in the spirit to Jesus, and had received the doctrines of the three letters.' The so-called 'doctrine of the three letters' refers to Barnabas' reading of a passage from the Septuagint version (Greek) of Genesis 17:23, which he cites: 'And Abraham circumcised from his household eighteen men and three hundred.' By means of the practice of *gematria* (seeing connections between letters and numbers, both represented by the Greek alphabet), Barnabas saw the significance of this passage in the number 318, which in Greek is represented by the three letters TIH. Barnabas proceeds:

> What then was the knowledge that was given to him? Notice that he first mentions the eighteen, and after a pause the three hundred. The eighteen is I (= 10) and H (= 8)—you have Jesus [IHSOUS]—and because the cross was destined to have grace in the T [300 in Greek] he says 'and three hundred.' So he indicates Jesus in the two letters and the cross in the other. He knows this who placed the gift of teaching in our hearts. No one has heard a more excellent lesson from me, but I know that you are worthy.
>
> *(Barnabas 9: 7–9)*

Such examples of early Christians finding Jesus present in the text of the Jewish scriptures are manifold. In the second century perhaps no one was more exhaustive in this regard than Justin Martyr in his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, written sometime between 155 and 161 CE. Justin's *Dialogue* exemplifies the continuing presentation of Christianity as having superseded Judaism while at the same time claiming that Jewish scriptures first and foremost were Christian scriptures because they were understood as testifying to the advent and rejection of Christ among the Jews. In his discussion, for example, of the theophany to Abraham at Mamre found in Genesis 18, Justin argued that 'the Lord' who appeared to Abraham was Christ, accompanied by the two angels who went on to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (*Dial.* 56).

Beyond the Christological readings of the Jewish scriptures, testimonies of Christianity's self-conscious displacement of Judaism as God's covenant people also pervade his *Dialogue*. In an address to Trypho the Jew, Justin's alleged disputant, Justin states (*Dial.* 119):

> After the Just One was put to death, we blossomed forth as another people, and sprang up like new and thriving corn . . . this is really the nation promised to Abraham by God . . . God promised Abraham a religious and righteous nation of like faith, and a delight to the Father; but it is not you, 'in whom there is no faith' (Deut. 32:20).

This kind of embrace of Jewish scripture while rejecting Judaism is commonplace in Christianity as it developed over the second and third centuries. Indeed, a whole *adversus Judaeos* ('against the Jews') literature developed during this time with stock features, accusing the Jews of rejecting Christ, which results in God's consequent rejection of the Jewish people (see the classic treatments by Williams 1935, Simon 1986, and Ruether 1979). There is a significant difference between second/third-century Christian theological attacks against Judaism and Christian polemics against Judaism represented in first-century Christian literature. The Christian movement at the end of the first century was just a generation removed from its historic Jewish Christian roots, with still a sizeable—if shrinking—proportion of Christians coming from a Jewish heritage. The tensions at this point still appear to be at least to some degree intramural fights over Jewish law, especially from the perspective of Roman rulers (see Acts 18:15). But in the second and third centuries with Gentile Christianity becoming far and away the dominant and virtually exclusive form of Christianity, Christian attacks on Judaism became increasingly extramural and the polemic not so much the self-definition of an emerging Christianity from its Jewish roots, but more Christian vilification of Judaism as a religion and a people renounced by God. Direct social engagement between Christians and Jews became less commonplace, with Christian attacks against Judaism quickly becoming more rhetorical fencing to defend the truth of Christian faith than actual representations of Christian interaction with real Jews.

Towards the end of the second century we come upon the *Peri Pascha* (*Paschal Homily*) by the Christian apologist Melito of Sardis. In it Melito rehearses the history of Israel with special focus on the Exodus and the Passover tradition, all of which he interprets from a Christological perspective. Melito is a good example of how Christians claimed the heritage of Israel with one hand, but with the other hand repudiated contemporary Judaism as rejected by God. Referring to Christ he writes:

> He is the Pascha [Passover] of our salvation. It is he who in many endured many things: it is he that was in Abel murdered, and in Isaac bound, and in Jacob exiled, and in Joseph sold, and in Moses exposed, and in the lamb slain, and in David persecuted, and in the prophets dishonoured.
>
> *(*Peri Pascha *69; Hall 1979: 51)*

According to Melito, the Jews repaid God's graciousness with ungrateful acts: 'evil for good and affliction for joy and death for life; in recompense for that you had to die' (*Peri Pascha* 90; Hall 1979: 51).

The pattern of Christian attacks on and denigration of Judaism continued in the writings of several authors from the Latin west from the end of the second century through the third century and beyond. In his *Against the Jews* Tertullian claimed that the Jews were idolaters who had been justly punished by God for denying the clear references in the prophetic writings to the advent of Christ. Novation wrote a trilogy against different aspects of Jewish life and worship: *On Circumcision*, *On the Sabbath*, and *On Jewish Foods* (so Jerome, *de Viris Illustribus* ['On Illustrious Men'] 70). A sermon from *c.* 260 CE falsely ascribed to the third-century North African bishop Cyprian, *Against the Jews*, repeats the by now standard accusations against the Jews, and appears to borrow heavily in Latin translation from Melito's homily *Peri Pascha*. And a fragment of a homily attributed to Hippolytus, *Against the Jews*, blames the Jews for their transgressions against God: 'Why was the temple made desolate? . . . it was because they killed the Son of their Benefactor' (*Against the Jews*, 7; *ANF* 5:220). It must be said that in most cases these writings were not addressed to Jews at all, but were written to convince pagans of the superiority of Christianity to Judaism. The Jews here served more as rhetorical foils for Christian apologetics than as real disputants. Even though Christian polemic against Judaism was commonplace in the second and third centuries, there were still groups of Christians who identified with Judaism and Jewish practices to greater and lesser degrees (see Chapter 6). In his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* Justin is asked by Trypho if someone who confesses Jesus to be the Christ will be saved if that person also observes the Jewish law. Justin responds: 'I say such a man will be saved, unless he exerts every effort to influence other men to practice the same rites as himself, informing them that they cannot be saved unless they do so' (*Dial.* 47). Justin goes on to say that some Christians refuse to have fellowship with such 'Judaizing' Christians, but he disagrees and argues that Christians should associate with other Christians, even if they follow Jewish law.

Perhaps the most significant example of Jewish Christianity in the second century was a group known as the Ebionites. We first hear of the Ebionites from the late second-century Christian heresiologist Irenaeus in his *Against Heresies*, where he would seem to dispute Justin's approach to the question of relating to Jewish Christians. Irenaeus writes:

> Those who are called Ebionites . . . use only the Gospel according to Matthew and reject the apostle Paul, whom they call an apostate from the law . . . They practice circumcision and persevere in legal customs and the Jewish way of life, so that they pray toward Jerusalem as if it were the house of God.
>
> *(1.26.2; Grant 1997: 95; see Schoeps 1969 and Daniélou 1964)*

Irenaeus also states that, like the Cerinthians and Carpocratians, the Ebionites denied that Jesus was born of a virgin, and they argued that at his baptism Christ descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove, departing from him just before he died. In this view Jesus was a great prophet, but not the divine Son of God worshipped by Christians.

Another Jewish Christian group from the second century, the Elchasites, also apparently had gnostic leanings. In his early third-century work, *Refutation of All Heresies* (also called the *Philosophumena*), the Christian heresiologist Hippolytus criticized the Elchasites for teaching that 'believers ought to be circumcised and live according to the Law' and for their belief that Christ was not born of a virgin (9.9.1; *ANF* 5: 132). The founder of the group, Elchasai (variously spelled), claimed to have received a revelation from a 96-mile-high angel whom he identified as the Son of God (9.8.1; *ANF* 5: 132). According to Elchasai, Christ was born a man, not of a virgin. Further, Christ had been born before and would continue to be born into the world from time to time, having transferred his soul from body to body. This mixture of soul migration and Jewish law observance was not widespread in early Christianity, but it does show something of the diversity of Christian attitudes towards Jewish practices and the strong responses against such observances that various Christian leaders such as Irenaeus and Hippolytus (and later Tertullian and Epiphanius) felt obliged to register.

Scripture, canon, and authority

While Christians certainly took over the Jewish scriptures as their own (see e.g., 1 Tim. 3:16), at least in their Septuagint form, Christians in the second and third centuries were also busy crafting a new canon, a new collection of authoritative writings (Gamble 1985; Metzger 1987; McDonald 1995). Towards the end of the first century, the voices of the apostles had started to die out, and a strong interest developed in preserving the story of Jesus as testified by the apostles and their immediate followers (so Luke 1:1–4). At times this process of forming a new Christian canon involved conscious deliberation, but more often than not we find Christians reflecting in retrospect on writings that had emerged as authoritative in various Christian communities. The earliest evidence of a collection of authoritative Christian writings comes from the second-century work that later became part of the 'New Testament' itself, 2 Peter. In 2 Peter 3:15–17, the author (certainly not Peter) writes about the collection of Paul's letters. (Whether the collection 2 Peter knew is the same as ours is unknown.) The author of 2 Peter states:

> Regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, beware that you are not carried away with the error of the lawless and lose your own stability.

Instructive here is the acknowledgment of Paul's letters as 'scripture,' which suggests that by the time 2 Peter wrote, probably sometime in the first half of the second century, the letters of Paul have taken on significant authority. And yet their authority was not without problems. Indeed, one almost gets the sense that 2 Peter would have been just as happy had Paul's difficult and hard to understand letters not survived to gain the authority they did. We also learn from this passage of rival groups of Christians ('the ignorant and unstable') who used the authority of Paul's writings to advocate a rather different understanding of Christian faith and practice than that espoused by 2 Peter.

The Pauline heritage was embraced by various groups in second-century Christianity. The apocryphal *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, for example, presents an image of Paul extolling an ascetic life and radically challenging traditional Greco-Roman household codes. By contrast the Pastoral Epistles (1, 2 Timothy and Titus—widely acknowledged as deutero-Pauline writings from the end of the first or beginning of the second century), endorse these same traditional household codes and encourage women to marry, have children, and manage their homes in a traditional manner (1 Timothy 2, 5; see MacDonald 1983).

This 'battle for Paul' in the memory, canon, and practice of the churches was perhaps nowhere more significant than in the case of Marcion (see MacDonald 1983). Marcion was a Christian originally from Asia Minor, who became influential in the church at Rome in the 140s CE. What we know of Marcion comes principally from the several second- and third-century Christian authors who wrote so strongly against him, especially Tertullian, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus (see, e.g., Tertullian, *Against Marcion*; Justin, *1 Apology* 26, 58; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.27; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 3.3; Origen, *Against Celsus* 5.54; 6.53, 74; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, hereafter *HE* 4.9; 5.13). In short, Marcion was convinced that the good and loving God revealed in Jesus Christ was different from the vindictive God of the Jews who created and ruled this world. The inferior God of the Jews, to whom Jewish scriptures testify, is a jealous and vengeful God who requires sacrifices, commands the slaughter of entire peoples, and is inconsistent (see Lieu 2015). Marcion argues that the loving God of Jesus is essentially antithetical to the God of the Jewish scriptures. Indeed, Marcion wrote a book entitled *Antitheses* in which he listed what he saw as various contradictions between the Jewish Scriptures and Christian writings. Marcion thus rejected the Jewish scriptures as having no authority whatsoever, since they were the ramblings of a lesser God than the Father of Jesus.

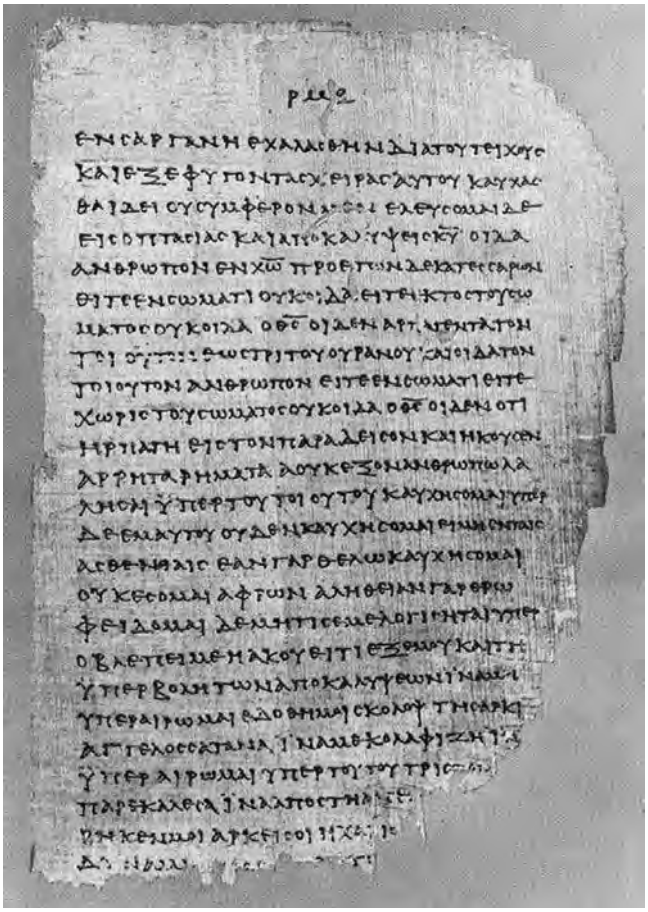

Figure 9.1 Folio of manuscript from P46 containing 2 Corinthians 11:33–12:9 from the Chester Beatty collection. Photo Wikicommons, public domain

In Marcion's view the earliest Jewish Christians had misunderstood what Jesus had intended; they failed to see the radical break with Jewish tradition and scripture that Jesus inaugurated. Marcion saw himself as the one who would restore the original intentions of Jesus and his most important follower, Paul. This restoration included purging the earliest Christian writings of the corruptions that earlier misinformed Christians had introduced into them. Specifically, this meant that Marcion produced an edited, expurgated version of the Gospel and of Paul's letters. Since earlier Christians had corrupted these writings with references to the Jewish scriptures, Marcion felt it was his enlightened duty to literally cut such references out of the text. In this endeavor, Marcion saw himself aligned with Paul in his fight against 'Judaizing' Christians. Paul was Marcion's hero, and yet in Marcion's view even Paul's letters had been corrupted by Judaizing interpolations. Marcion thus rendered the first collection of 'New Testament' writings into his own version of the Christian canon: ten of Paul's letters (not including the Pastoral Epistles) and the Gospel of Luke (which Marcion thought Paul had also originally written in an earlier form). Marcion gained a following at Rome and was expelled by the Roman church in 144 CE. Marcionite churches sprang up in various places and endured for several centuries (see Von Harnack 1924; Hoffmann 1984; BeDuhn 2013; Lieu 2015).

By the end of the second century, the four canonical Gospels had gained authoritative stature. In the middle of the century Justin Martyr made many allusions to the Gospels and referred to them

as the 'Memoirs of the Apostles' (*Dial.* 100, 104–105). Around 160 CE Justin's student, Tatian, compiled a harmony of the four Gospels, the *Diatessaron*, which circulated widely in eastern Christianity among Syriac-speaking churches. The *Diatessaron* was the standard text of the Gospels for these churches down through the fifth century, when it finally gave way to the four separate Gospels. The fourfold character of the Gospels provided Irenaeus with the opportunity to reflect on the number of the Gospels. He wrote:

> It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are, since there are four directions of the world in which we are, and four principal winds . . . The four living creatures [of Rev. 4:9] symbolize the four Gospels . . . and there were four principal covenants made with humanity, through Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Christ.
>
> (Against Heresies *3.11.8; see Metzger 1987: 154–155)*

It is worth noting that Irenaeus defended the fourfold character of the Gospel collection in his treatise against heretics, and especially against gnostic Christians, for whom other gospels had also gained some authority (e.g., the *Gospel of Philip* and the *Gospel of Thomas*).

Also important to our understanding of the formation of the New Testament are various canonical lists from the second and third centuries (see Theron 1957: 107–127). Most significant here are the Muratorian Canon and statements from Origen and Eusebius. The Muratorian Canon is a late second-century Latin fragment, 85 lines long, containing a list of Christian writings that were held to be canonical. The list reflects both early Christian consensus and debate about which writings were authoritative and which were not, as well as discussion of various degrees of authority. It includes all of the New Testament writings except for four, making no reference to Hebrews, James, or 1 and 2 Peter. But the list also refers to the *Wisdom of Solomon* and the *Apocalypse of Peter*, though it is acknowledged that 'some of us are not willing that the latter be read in church' (line 72). The author of the list further makes reference to the *Shepherd of Hermas*, which was written:

> [v]ery recently, in our times' (line 74), and which 'ought indeed to be read; but it cannot be read publicly to the people in church either among the prophets, whose number is complete, or among the apostles, for it is after [their] time.
>
> *(lines 77–80)*

Thus there appear to be three kinds of Christian writings: (1) canonical writings, for reading in the churches; (2) semi-canonical writings about which there is a dispute as to whether or not they can be read in church; and (3) writings worth reading, but of lesser authority and so inappropriate for public reading in church services. A fourth kind of writing also appears in the list, writings that should simply not be read because, presumably, they come from heterodox Christian groups. 'But we accept nothing whatever of Arsinous or Valentinus or Miltiades, who also composed a new book of psalms for Marcion, together with Basilides, the Asian founder of the Cataphrygians' (lines 81–85; see Metzger 1987: 305–307).

In his *Ecclesiastical History* (6.25.3–4) Eusebius relates that Origen wrote a commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, in which Origen defended the canon of scripture accepted by the church. Origen is aware of other gospels, which he approves, such as the *Gospel of Peter* and the *Protoevangelium of James* (*Commentary on Matthew* 10.17). He apparently also knew first-hand several gospels that he rejected as coming from false teachers. He names gospels of Thomas, Matthias, the Twelve Apostles, Basilides, and the *Gospel according to the Egyptians*. These, he says, were written 'without having the grace of the Holy Spirit' (*Homily on Luke* 1; see Metzger 1987: 135–141). In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius summarizes his understanding of the New Testament canon in ways similar to what we have seen in the Muratorian Canon and in Origen (see Grant 1980; Attridge and Hata 1992). He refers to recognized, disputed, and spurious books, and then lists examples of heretical writings (3.25.1–7).

In the second and third centuries, then, we find a general acceptance of the four Gospels and the letters of Paul as the most authoritative writings from the time of the apostles. But we also see the continued production of many pseudonymous and apocryphal works from different Christian groups seeking to articulate their vision of Christian faith (see Layton 1987; Elliott 1993). Though there was a general consensus regarding the Gospels and the letters of Paul (having been rescued from the grasp of Marcion), along with Acts, 1 John, and 1 Peter, it remains significant that church leaders assigned different degrees of authority to different early Christian writings. The edges of the New Testament canon, thus, remained in flux for some time. Indeed, while in 367 CE the bishop Athanasius wrote an Easter letter that included for the first time an exclusive list of all 27 New Testament 'books' that became commonplace, still the debate over the exact contours of the canon persisted well into the fifth and sixth centuries CE (Metzger 1987).

Geographic spread of Christianity

By the end of the first century, significant Christian communities had already spread from Palestine to various cities in Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, and to Rome. In the middle of the first century in his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul indicated his plans to preach the gospel in Spain, since 'from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum I have fully proclaimed the good news of Christ' (Rom 15:19) and found 'no further place for me in these regions' (15:23). Churches in such major urban centers as Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome provided the springboard for extensive Christian expansion in the second and third centuries. Extensive material remains of early Christianity in Rome can still be seen in the catacombs there, with some of the frescoes with which they are decorated dated to the latter part of the second century CE.

Christianity spread fairly quickly in Asia Minor, as indicated by the letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation 1–3 and by the letters of Ignatius. In addition to Ephesus, Christian communities were located in Smyrna, Pergamum, Sardis, Philadelphia, Thyatira, Troas, Magnesia, and Tralles, among other places. Pliny's letter to the emperor Trajan (more on this below) and 1 Peter 1 show that significant numbers of Christians were to be found in Bithynia and Pontus as well.

Christianity in Syria spread from Antioch to Syriac-speaking Edessa, where the late second-century Christian Bardesanes was prominent. Bardesanes represented a kind of gnosticizing docetic Christianity later rejected by the church there. Third-century Edessene Christians claimed that Thaddaeus (Addai in Syriac tradition), whom they believed to be one of the 72 disciples sent out by Jesus, had founded the church there, and that King Abgar had even corresponded with Jesus (see Eusebius, *HE* 1.13). At Dura-Europos, a Roman fortress on the Euphrates, archaeologists have uncovered the earliest known house-church, dating to 232 CE, in which Greek fragments of Tatian's *Diatessaron* were found.

Figure 9.2 Fresco of a baptism from San Callisto catacomb. Photo Wilpert 1903, *Tavola* 27

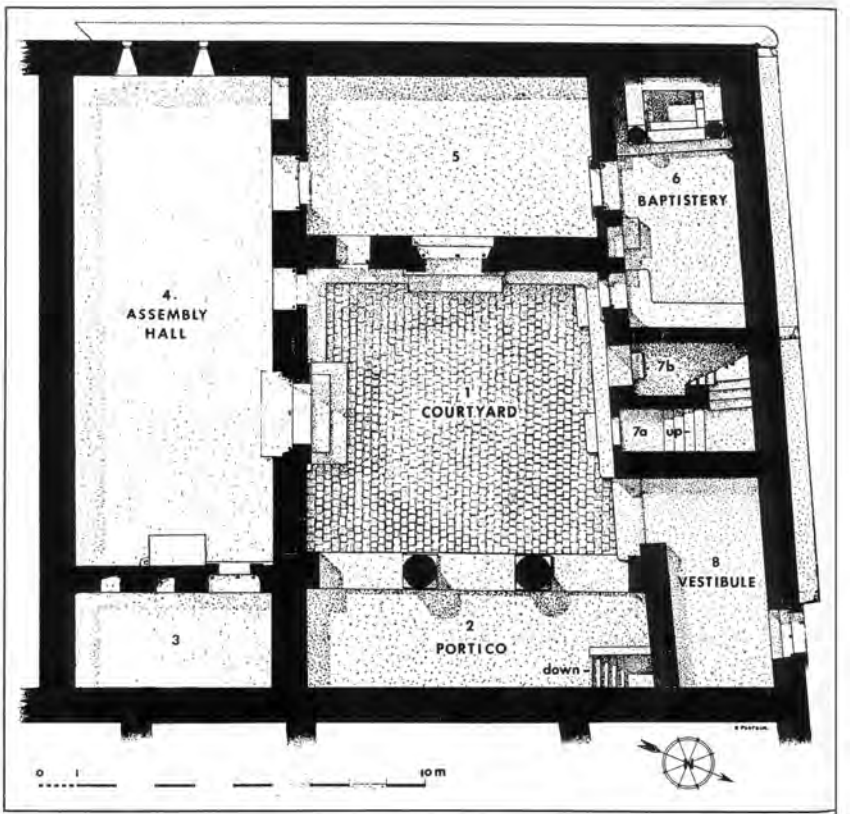

Figure 9.3 Floor plan of house-church dating to 232 CE from Dura-Europos. Reproduced from Snyder (2013: 132), by permission of Mercer University Press

Even further to the East, the third-century apocryphal *Acts of Thomas* reports that Christians were to be found in Persia and India, though there are doubts about the veracity of this tradition (Elliott 1993: 439–511).

To the west, Christianity spread quickly in Italy and by the middle of the third century about 100 episcopal sees were to be found there, with Rome as the clear center. In Gaul and Spain, Christian communities spread more slowly, but were well established by the end of the second century in Lyons, where Irenaeus was bishop, and Vienne, where Christians suffered under the persecution of Marcus Aurelius in 177 CE. Irenaeus also reports churches in Germany and Iberia (*Against Heresies* 1.10.2). By the end of the third century, episcopal sees were to be found in Arles, Rouen, Paris, Bordeaux, Trier, and Rheims. Tertullian tells of churches in Spain (*Apology* 37), as does Cyprian, who mentions churches in Leon, Astorga, Merida, and Saragossa. Christianity also appears to have spread to Britain by the end of the third century, but probably not much before then (but see Chapter 17). British bishops from London and York are reported to have attended the Council of Arles in 314.

In North Africa, the city of Carthage was a major center for Christianity. Tertullian at the end of the second century and Cyprian in the middle of the third century give some indication of the vitality of the church in the region surrounding Carthage as well as in Numidia and Tunisia. African Christianity was also prominently found in Alexandria, as the Christian school headed by Clement and then Origen bears witness in the mid and late second century. Such writings as the apocryphal *Gospel of the Egyptians*, which denigrates marriage, indicate somewhat ascetic groups of Christians in Egypt.

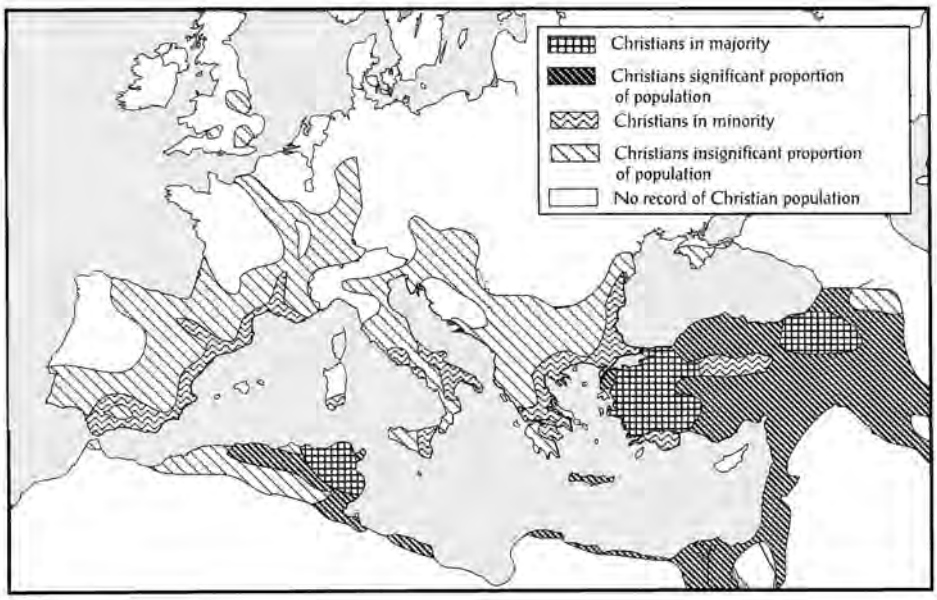

Figure 9.4 Map showing spread of Christianity by 300 CE. Reproduced from Hinson (1996: 106), by permission of Abingdon Press

The presence of gnostic forms of Christianity in Egypt is also attested by the writings discovered at Nag Hammadi, though how early gnostic Christians can be dated in Egypt is disputed (see Bauer 1971; Pearson and Goehring 1986; Brakke 2012; Denzey Lewis 2012).

Christianity and the Roman empire

If direct social relations between Christians and Jews grew both more polarized and less frequent by the end of the third century, social relations between Christians and official Rome became increasingly difficult and inevitably complicated, as Roman magistrates came to view Christians as a group separate from the Jews. In an early and oft-cited second-century letter, Pliny, governor of Bithynia, seeks counsel from the emperor Trajan regarding how to deal with those who have been denounced as Christians. The letter shows how Roman officials were still very much in the process of formulating responses to the increasing presence of Christians, and Roman Christians at that, in society. Pliny expresses uncertainty about what factors should enter into his judgments about Christians, whether considerations are made, for example, for those who repent, for the age of the accused, or for the degree of recalcitrance. Should Christians be punished only for specific crimes or merely for their association with the name 'Christian'? Pliny writes:

> This is the course I have taken with those who were accused before me as Christians. I asked them whether they were Christians, and if they confessed, I asked them a second and third time with threats of punishment. If they kept to it, I ordered them for execution; for I held no question that whatever it was that they admitted, in any case obstinacy and unbending perversity deserves to be punished.
>
> *(Pliny,* Letters *10.96; in Stevenson 1957: 13–14)*

Pliny continues by stating that if individuals denounced as Christians recited a prayer to the Roman gods, poured out a libation to the statue of the emperor, and cursed Christ, then they were free

to go. Those who refused so to demonstrate their loyalty to Rome were punished. In response to Pliny's inquiry, the emperor Trajan agreed that Pliny had adopted the appropriate policy. Christians, he wrote:

> [a]re not to be sought out; but if they are accused and convicted, they must be punished—yet on this condition, that who so denies himself to be a Christian, and makes the fact plain by his action, that is, by worshipping our gods, shall obtain pardon on his repentance, however suspicious his past conduct may be.
>
> *(Pliny,* Letters *10.97; in Stevenson 1957: 16)*

In general, Roman officials were suspicious of Christians for their stubborn refusal to pay homage to the emperor and to the gods of Rome, though some emperors were more concerned with the persistence and spread of Christianity than others. State-sponsored suppression of Christianity was occasional and largely regional in scope (Sordi 1994). It is significant that during the rule of Trajan (98–117 CE), the emperor's response to Pliny expressly states that Christians are not to be sought out for punishment and that anonymous accusations against Christians were not to be taken seriously. There were, to be sure, celebrated cases of Christian martyrdom, but these events were noteworthy for their infrequency (see Frend 1967; Fox 1987: 419–492; Moss 2012).

Perhaps the best-known Christian martyr in the first half of the second century was Ignatius of Antioch. Writing to the church at Rome around 110 CE, Ignatius basically asks the Christians at Rome not to intercede on his behalf, lest he be deprived of the glories of martyrdom:

> I long for the beasts that are prepared for me . . . I will even entice them to devour me promptly . . . Grant me this favour . . . Let there come on me fire, and cross, and struggles with wild beasts, cutting, and tearing asunder, rackings of bones, mangling of limbs, crushing of my whole body, cruel tortures of the devil, may I but attain to Jesus Christ!
>
> *(*Ignatius to the Romans *5.2–3)*

It appears that popular outcry against Christians was more a problem than official state persecution. During the reign of Hadrian (117–138 CE), according to Eusebius, the emperor reaffirmed the policy of Trajan, but he does not take lightly false charges brought against Christians. In a rescript to Minucius Fundanus, the proconsul of Asia, Hadrian declares:

> If then anyone accuses them [Christians], and shows that they are acting illegally, decide the point according to the nature of the offence, but by Hercules, if anyone brings the matter forward for the purpose of blackmail, investigate strenuously and be careful to inflict penalties adequate to the crime [of blackmail].
>
> *(Eusebius*, HE *4.9.3)*

The emperor Antonius Pius (138–161 CE) repeated the same policies as his predecessors. The most significant Christian martyr during this period was Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who was put to death at the age of eighty-six in 155 CE. A famous account of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* survives in the collection of *Apostolic Fathers*. Even more than the actual death of Polycarp, the account of his trial and his defiant response are remarkable. When asked to 'swear by the genius of Caesar,' Polycarp answered:

> If you vainly suppose that I will swear by the genius of Caesar, as you say, and pretend that you are ignorant who I am, listen plainly: I am a Christian. And if you wish to learn the doctrine of Christianity fix a day and listen.
>
> *(*Martyrdom of Polycarp *10.1)*

Under the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161–180 CE), well-known as a Stoic philosopher, persecution of Christians intensified somewhat. During his rule Justin Martyr was put to death in Rome. Eusebius relates that in 177 CE, in Lyons and Vienne in the region of Gaul, a number of Christians were put to death after first suffering being robbed, imprisoned, excluded from the public baths, stoned, and tortured (Eusebius, *HE* 5.1.7–63). In the African city of Scilli, 12 Christians, both men and women, were martyred in 180 CE for refusing to swear by the genius of the emperor. By contrast, the reign of Commodus (180–193 CE) provided a time of relative calm for Christians.

The third century of Christianity was marked by alternating periods of official, and at times intense, persecution and mostly peaceful relations with imperial Rome. The stable and prosperous age of the Antonine rulers had come to a close, and with the Severan dynasty (192–235) a period of relative decline commenced for the Roman empire. This gave way in the 50 years that followed (235–284 CE) to a time of constant external threats on the empire's borders and internal threats from unstable rule and military unrest. A succession of nearly 20 emperors came and went before Diocletian and then Constantine came to power at the end of the third and beginning of the fourth centuries.

A significant persecution broke out under the emperor Septimius Severus (193–211 CE) in 202 CE, when he issued an edict banning new conversions to Judaism or Christianity. According to Eusebius (*HE* 6.1–3), Christians in Alexandria felt the pressure of this persecution to such a degree that Clement, the leader of the Christian school there, fled from the city. Origen's father, Leonides, was beheaded and many other Christians in Alexandria were martyred along with him. Origen himself, only 18 years old at this time, desired to be martyred with his father, but Origen's mother 'hid all his clothes, and so laid upon him the necessity of remaining at home' (*HE* 6.2.5). The persecution under Severus was also felt in Carthage, where, in 203 CE the famous martyrdom of Perpetua occurred. Some Christians fled, some were arrested, some renounced their faith, and some paid money to stave off arrest and possible martyrdom (so Tertullian, *Concerning Flight in Persecution* 13).

After Severus' death in 211 CE, his son M. Aurelius Antoninus (Caracalla; 211–217 CE) initially continued the policy of persecution, which was especially heavy under Scapula, Proconsul of Africa (211–213 CE), who had Christians exposed to wild beasts and burned. One of Tertullian's apologetic works is addressed 'To Scapula,' in which he seeks to demonstrate that Christians are no threat to the empire. He writes: 'To the emperor we render such reverential homage as is lawful for us and good for him; regarding him as the human being next to God who from God has received all his power, and is less than God alone' (*To Scapula* 2; *ANF* 3: 105–106). But in the same breath, Tertullian also issues a warning in no uncertain terms: 'it cannot but distress us that no state shall bear unpunished the guilt of shedding Christian blood' (*To Scapula* 3; *ANF* 3: 106).

Christians enjoyed significant rest from persecution under the rules of Elagabalus (218–222 CE) and Severus Alexander (222–235 CE), and appear to have flourished during the latter's reign (*HE* 6.21.3). There was a brief resurgence of local persecution under the emperor Maximin (235–238 CE), who was annoyed, so Eusebius writes, that 'the house of Alexander consisted for the most part of believers' (*HE* 6.28.1). The extent of the persecution is unclear, though it appears at least that the bishop of Rome, Pontianus, was exiled and martyred. It was during this outbreak of persecution that Origen composed his *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, in which he encouraged Ambrose and Protectus (the two addressees) to stand firm in their faith when they answered the summons to appear before the emperor.

After Maximin, the church experienced peace during the reign of Philip (244–249 CE), who was purported to be 'the first Christian emperor' (Jerome, *On Illustrious Men* 54), a sentiment shared by Eusebius (*EH* 6.34.1). Eusebius relates the story that Philip desired to share in the paschal vigil but was denied permission to enter the church by the bishop until he did penance for his sins. 'It is said that he obeyed readily, displaying by his actions how genuine and pious was his disposition towards the fear of God' (*HE* 6.34.1). Whether this is an accurate report or Eusebius' exaggeration of the emperor's piety, it seems clear that Philip was not disposed against Christians.

The relative peace and security of the church from 212–249 CE, even with the brief eruption of persecution in 235 CE, left Christians unprepared for the sharply negative turn in imperial attitudes towards Christianity that came with the rule of the emperors Decius (249–251 CE) and Valerian (253–260 CE). Whereas much of the animosity towards Christians to this point was popular in character with the occasional backing of sporadic imperial involvement, Decius was the first emperor to engage in a systematic effort to dissuade all citizens from participating in Christian practices. The emperor ordered all citizens, and not just Christians, to obtain a *libellus* (a certificate) showing that they had sacrificed to the gods before imperial officials. Many nominal Christians quickly acquiesced while others fled or purchased certificates. But several Christian leaders were steadfast and submitted to punishment instead of renouncing their faith. Fabian, the bishop of Rome, was martyred; Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, was imprisoned and died; in Antioch the church leader Babylas also perished in prison; others were martyred in Alexandria (*HE* 6.39.1–4; 6.40.1). Even the well-known Origen was imprisoned and tortured, hastening his eventual death a few years later (*HE* 6.39.5).

Cyprian, who became bishop of Carthage (248–258 CE) shortly before the persecution broke out, followed the counsel of his fellow clergy and went into hiding, from where he continued to attend to the affairs of the church through letters and personal envoys (see *Epistles* 5:1; *ANF* 5:282). Cyprian's own flight from probable arrest and martyrdom during the Decian persecution later became an issue, and was especially criticized by leaders of the church at Rome. After the persecution ended in 251 CE, Cyprian returned from hiding and faced the dilemma of how best to deal with lapsed Christians who had defiled their faith by giving in to imperial demands to offer sacrifices to the gods, but now sought repentance and reconciliation. The church was significantly divided over this issue. On one side of the debate were those, such as Novatus, who argued that lapsed Christians should be restored to fellowship immediately and that their momentary apostasy during the persecutions should be forgiven. On the other side were more rigorist Christians like Novatian, who (indebted perhaps to the teachings of their predecessors Tertullian and Hippolytus) argued that it was not within the church's power to restore to fellowship those who had once renounced their faith. Cyprian sought to provide a middle course between these two sides. In his treatise *Concerning the Lapsed*, written in 251 CE, Cyprian argued that all those who had sacrificed to the gods, and even those who had purchased certificates of sacrifice, must submit to appropriate penance and that the church could not grant easy pardon. Still, those who had given in only after suffering torture were to be shown greater leniency. Thus each individual case was to be evaluated on the basis of its own merits and the appropriate length of penance determined accordingly.

A few years after Decius, the emperor Valerian (253–260 CE) initiated renewed persecution of Christians in 257 CE. Eusebius describes Valerian as at first well disposed towards Christians: 'not a single one of the emperors before him was so kindly and favorably disposed towards them . . . indeed all his house had been filled with godly persons, and was a church of God' (*HE* 7.10.3). But Valerian changed his view of Christianity. In 257 CE he issued an edict seeking to restore traditional commitment to the gods of the empire through appropriate sacrifices. Perhaps such a return to the traditional Roman gods would help mend the troubles of the empire. He forbade Christian gatherings, arrested several bishops, and exiled others, including Cyprian. Valerian then ordered the execution of church leaders who would not set an example for other Christians by offering sacrifices to the gods. Among those martyred at this time was Cyprian, who was beheaded not far from Carthage.

Following Valerian's capture during battle in the eastern part of the empire (which the Christians interpreted as God's just retribution against him for his persecution of the church), his son Gallienus became emperor (260–268 CE). According to Eusebius, Gallienus 'immediately by means of edicts put an end to the persecution against us' and issued an ordinance granting 'free power to those who presided over the word to perform their accustomed duties' (*HE* 7.13.1). With this was inaugurated a more than forty-year period of relative peace between the empire and the church. There were sporadic local persecutions of Christians during this time, but nothing like those suffered under Decius and Valerian, and certainly nothing like what was to follow in the 'Great Persecution' under Diocletian.

Diocletian and the Great Persecution

Diocletian ruled from 284 to 304 CE and early on in his reign appeared to favor Christianity. Eusebius reports that there were many Christians in the imperial household (*HE* 8.6.1). But Diocletian's view of Christianity began to change. There were troubles with some Christians who did not wish to serve in the army. And at a sacrifice where Diocletian was present, the augurs were unable to read the typical signs from the livers of the sacrificial animals allegedly because of some Christians there who made the sign of the cross and so disrupted the sacrifice. The oracle of Apollo informed the emperor that Christians were responsible for false oracles being given. Thus Diocletian quickly decided that Christianity was interfering with significant matters of state, and in 303 CE he issued the first in a series of edicts against Christianity and began an intense attack upon Christians and their churches. Lactantius, an eyewitness to the persecution, reports in detail on the deaths of many Christians (*On the Death of the Persecutors* 15, a work written around 317 CE). Eusebius writes:

> [a]n imperial letter was everywhere promulgated, ordering the razing of the churches to the ground and the destruction by fire of the Scriptures . . . the order was given that the presidents of the churches should all, in every place, be first committed to prison, and then afterwards compelled by every kind of device to sacrifice.
>
> *(*HE *8.2.4)*

But many church leaders refused to offer sacrifice, and so were put to death. 'Presbyters and other officers of the Church were seized . . . condemned, and together with their families led to execution' (Lactantius, *On the Death of the Persecutors*, 15; *ANF* 7: 306).

When Diocletian fell ill and retired from public life in 304 CE, imperial opposition to the church continued under Galerius, who took power in the eastern part of the empire. Galerius issued an edict in keeping with Diocletian's policy, commanding 'that all citizens in every country in each city offer sacrifices publicly and libations to the idols' (Eusebius, *Martyrs of Palestine* 3). In the western part of the empire, Constantius Chlorus (the father of Constantine) ruled with less intense animosity towards the Christians. After Constantius died in 306 CE, Constantine's soldiers proclaimed him emperor and he ruled in the west along with Licinius and Maxentius. Finally, after the death of Galerius and no little struggle over the consolidation of imperial rule, Constantine and Licinius in 313 CE jointly issued the famous Edict of Milan, which was a watershed in religious freedom especially for Christians. The emperors resolved 'to grant both to the Christians and to all others the full authority to follow whatever worship each man has desired; whereby whatsoever Divinity dwells in heaven may be benevolent and propitious to us' (so Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the* Persecutors 48.2; see also Eusebius, *HE* 10.5.2–17). The edict also stipulated that church buildings that had been destroyed during the suppression under Diocletian should be restored along with other property.

Figure 9.5 Coin from reign of Diocletian. Photo Wikicommons, own work, author Sosius 11

Imperial reaction to Christianity during the second and third centuries, however, is only part of the story. Christians not only had to deal with sporadic opposition and hostility on the imperial front, they also faced significant popular opposition from Greco-Roman society at large on a regular basis (see Wilken 1984). Christian authors were on the defensive and were concerned to respond to popular caricatures of Christian faith and teaching. Various apologists such as Aristides, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, and Theophilus of Antioch sought respectability for Christianity in the public square of the second century. In the middle of the third century, Origen wrote his famous *Contra Celsum*, a refutation of the pagan critic and Platonist Celsus whose ridicule of Christianity in the late second century apparently still warranted Christian response in the middle of the third century. Partly in response to Origen's defense against Celsus, the great third-century neo-Platonic writer Porphry (*c.* 232–303 CE) wrote one of the most significant critiques against Christians and their teachings, preserved in fragments of his *Against the Christians* (especially criticizing Christian biblical interpretation) and his *Philosophy from Oracles*. The refutation of his arguments would occupy several prominent Christian writers in the following centuries (e.g., Eusebius, Methodius, Apollinarius, Jerome, and Augustine; see Schoedel and Wilken 1979).

Movements and controversies

What remains in this chapter is to describe in broad strokes some of the more significant internal movements and controversies that shaped Christianity in the second and third centuries, many of which developments receive more attention in other chapters of this volume.

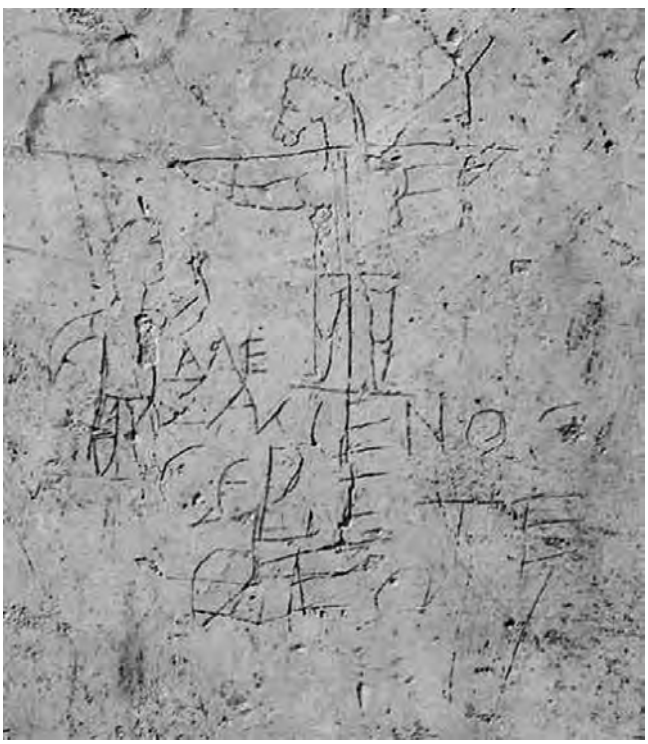

Figure 9.6 A graffito from the Palatine in Rome *c.* 200 CE, of an ass-headed Christ crucified, with the inscription, 'Alexamenos worships his God.' Reproduced from Matthews 1993. Copyright 1993 by Princeton University Press. Reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press

Figure 9.7 Tracing of the Alexamenos graffito (in Figure 9.6). By the author

Gnosticism

Scholarly discussion of gnostic movements in early Christianity (see Chapter 42 for more detail) has undergone significant debate and revision over the last 20 years revolving around issues of definition, with significant challenges to earlier scholarly constructs of 'gnosticism' (see Williams 1999; King 2003; Brakke 2010; Denzey Lewis 2012). It is telling that even reference to the term or category of 'gnosticism' often appears in quotation marks to indicate its disputed status in scholarly discussion. Some scholars dispute that any monolithic form of what has been termed 'gnosticism' ever existed (Williams 1999; King 2003), while others adopt a more moderate approach to the question, arguing that from the Nag Hammadi Library discovered in 1945 it is possible to identify Sethian Gnosticism as a discrete religious movement (Layton 1987; Brakke 2010), and also to discuss Valentinian Christianity in the second century as significantly influenced by general gnostic ideas.

This more moderate approach seeks to treat the early Christian heresiological literature (especially Irenaeus' *Against Heresies*) both critically and seriously as reflecting proto-orthodox views of theological fault-lines within the diversity that was second- and third-century Christianities.

The heresiological perspective of early Christianity reflected in the works of Irenaeus and Hippolytus still provide important information as scholars seek to reconstruct what can be known about movements that emphasized secret and special *gnosis* ('knowledge'), whether as part of the Christian faith or not. From Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* we learn at least something about what various proto-orthodox leaders considered to be false teachings that depended upon an elaborate cosmology rooted in a generic gnostic myth about the origin of creation and the salvation of human beings from an evil and fallen physical world. Along these lines, gnostic doctrine taught that the world came about as a result of a catastrophic rupture in the *pleroma*, the fullness of God, through the fall of Sophia (wisdom). This fall resulted in various emanations from the primordial beginning, with various pairs of 'aeons' including the emanation of Christ and the Spirit who bring Sophia back into harmony with the fullness of God (so the Valentinians). The material universe came into existence through the activity of the *demiurge* (creator), a kind of lesser god whose creative actions have entrapped divine sparks in a fallen material world. These divine sparks can only be 'saved' by ascending to the *pleroma*, and so be united again with the fullness of God from whence they came. But such return is only possible with special knowledge of the secret teachings mediated by certain gnostic leaders, knowledge they believed had been revealed by the savior Christ. Christ was indeed a redeemer who came from God, but redemption was not to be found in his physical death and resurrection so much as in his secret teachings. The opening line of the *Gospel of Thomas* is illustrative: 'These are the secret words which the living Jesus spoke' (Elliott 1993: 135). In the view of such gnostic believers, Jesus was not really a flesh and blood human being, rather he was a docetic figure, one who appeared (the Greek *dokei* meaning 'he appears') to be fully human in order to fool the creator, but was in fact only a spirit. Objections to such docetic views of Christ can already be found in 1 John 4:2 and 2 John 7.

There were many different gnostic groups with a great variety of teachings, according to Irenaeus. In addition to the Valentinians, the Sethians, the Basilidians, the Cerinthians, and the Carpocrations were among the more significant forms of groups emphasizing special *gnosis*. The Valentinian gnostics produced such writings as the *Gospel of Truth* and *Ptolemy's Letter to Flora*, and made explicit claims to be Christians. The Sethian gnostics (named for their devotion to Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve, as a revealer figure) produced a different corpus, including the following Nag Hammadi documents: the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Three Steles of Seth*, the *Apocalypse of Adam*, and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (see Layton 1987; Brakke 2010).

Despite the concern of many Christian leaders with (in their view) false gnostic teachings, other Christian leaders could use similar language about secret teachings to call Christians to deeper spiritual maturity. Clement of Alexandria (*c.* 160–216 CE), for example, made a distinction between the simple faith of Christians and 'true gnostics,' those few Christians who had a greater and more privileged 'gnosis.' These true Christian gnostics derived their deeper understanding from a combination of sources: allegorical interpretation of the scriptures, incorporation of Platonic ideas, and secret traditions (*Stromateis* 6.7; 7.3, 7–15; *ANF* 2: 493–494). Though Clement attacked a docetic Christology, he could use language similar to those emphasizing secret teaching. In a reflection on why Christ ate, for example, Clement reflects:

> He ate, not for the sake of the body, which was kept together by a holy energy, but in order that it might not enter into the minds of those who were with Him to entertain a different opinion of Him . . . He was entirely impassible, inaccessible to any movement of feeling—either pleasure or pain.
>
> *(*Stromateis *6.9;* ANF *2: 496)*

Origen, Clement's successor at Alexandria, likewise sought deeper spiritual understanding and hidden meanings in biblical texts. And although he did not advocate the return of divine sparks to the *pleroma*, he did argue for the doctrine of *apokatastasis*, a thoroughly spiritual eschatology in which all of the universe and all humanity would ultimately be restored to its original harmony with God (*First Principles* 2.3.1).

Montanism

At the same time that Christian unity was being challenged by so-called gnostic movements, another group, the Montanists, arose in the second half of the second century in the area of Phyrgia in Asia, though they spread quickly to Rome and to Christian communities in North Africa (see Chapter 43 for more details). Montanus, a convert to Christianity, declared that he was possessed by the Holy Spirit and so started speaking in tongues and prophesying. He was soon joined by two women, Priscilla and Maximilla, who likewise claimed to be inspired by the Spirit. Together they claimed to have a 'new prophecy,' a new revelation that had been given to them in keeping with the Christian faith they had received. This new revelation included an intense eschatological expectation of the sudden return of Christ, who they believed would inaugurate the new Jerusalem and with it God's kingdom in the town of Pepuza in Phyrgia (Montanus' home town). They advocated an ethical code of tremendous rigor that involved more frequent fasting and a greater emphasis on virginity. Montanists also refused to restore those who had fallen away during persecution, and they embraced martyrdom. Most of what we know about Montanism comes from its most famous and enthusiastic adherent, Tertullian, who joined the Montanist group around 206 CE (see Eusebius, *HE* 5.14–19).

Monarchianism

Another split along doctrinal lines arose in the latter half of the second century as Christians sought to clarify both the unity and yet the distinction between Christ the Son and God the Father. In Justin Martyr's view, Christ the divine Logos was 'another God' beside the Father (Osborn 1973). Justin's analogous description of the Logos as distinct from the Father in the same way that one torch derives its flame from another begged the charge of ditheism, threatening the single oneness, the *monarchia*, of God the creator. Thus, the '*alogoi*,' those opposed to Justin's Logos theology, argued for the unity of the Father and the Son. At the beginning of the third century, a certain Sabellius, about whom we know little, apparently advocated that the Father and the Son were merely different aspects of the same being, the same one God. But this position led in turn to the accusation of 'patripassianism,' that to so closely identify the Son with the Father implied that the Father suffers with the Son. (This view has also been named 'modalism' since Father/Son/Spirit were seen as different modes of the same being.)

The debate broke out as a heated controversy in Rome under the episcopacy of Zephyrinus (198–217 CE). Sabellius led the Monarchian position, and Hippolytus defended the Logos theology that the Father and the Logos are two distinct *prosōpa* ('persons'). Callistus, a deacon at Rome, argued for a middle path between these two extremes. When Callistus succeeded Zephyrinus as bishop of Rome in 217 CE, Hippolytus led a split from the church, partly over the Monarchian dispute, partly over Callistus' lax approach to readmitting lapsed Christians, and also because of Hippolytus' apparent general disdain for Callistus as a person (see *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.6). The Monarchian controversy continued well into the third century. Tertullian wrote a strong tract against Praxeas (a Monarchian from Asia Minor who had opposed the Montanist movement), and proposed language that became very influential in the dispute. He held the Father and the Son in unity, but a unity in which there was a distinction. As Tertullian put it, God is 'one substance consisting in three

persons.' This language was adopted in the middle of the third century by the Roman presbyter Novation in his *On the Trinity* and so set the pattern for Christian churches through the Trinitarian debates that would follow.

Other debates also erupted from time to time. For example, in 254 CE a vitriolic dispute arose over whether or not schismatic Christians needed to be rebaptized in order to demonstrate repentance. Cyprian in Carthage held that they did, while Stephen in Rome held that they did not (cf. Cyprian, *Epistles* 70, 75; Eusebius, *HE* 7.5.1–6). There were also a series of schisms resulting from rival claims to the episcopal see of Rome (Hippolytus versus Callistus in 217 CE; Novation versus Cornelius in 251 CE). The so-called Quartodeciman debate over the dating of Easter also caused a significant divide between the eastern and western parts of the church.

Unity in diversity and division

Amidst all these various disputes and controversies in second- and third-century Christianity, what held the churches together in relative unity? Several unifying factors can be identified. Certainly the authority attributed to the writings of the emerging New Testament canon were very significant, as the use in particular of the same Gospels and the letters of Paul forged a common bond between Christians of different theological stripes across large geographic and cultural divides. When Christians in different locales gathered for worship and read from the same new (and old) scriptures, even if they did not share a common lectionary, this practice allowed the formation of a common Christian identity. There were surely disputes about the contours of the canon, but the collective use of the four Gospels, along with the letters of Paul, 1 John and 1 Peter, was a powerful unifying force.

Another unifying factor was the institutional structure of the church, with its emphasis on local ruling bishops who gathered in times of crisis in an effort to shape a common direction for the diverse clusters of Christian churches. Especially important here were the Christian leaders and bishops from Rome, Alexandria, Carthage, and Antioch. Episcopal authority was seen as grounded in apostolic authority and eventually in apostolic succession (Von Campenhausen 1969). Already at the end of the first century, Clement of Rome thought it within the scope of his authority to write and admonish the church in Corinth for deposing various presbyters. Appealing to the authority of the apostles before him, Clement writes:

> Our apostles knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that there would be strife for the title of bishop. For this cause . . . they appointed those who have been already mentioned, and afterwards added the codicil that if they should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed to their ministry.
>
> *(*First Epistle to the Corinthians *44.1–2)*

Among the so-called 'Apostolic Fathers' in the early second century (see Chapter 27), Ignatius of Antioch also appealed to the authority of bishops and elders, whom he saw as agents of Christ and the apostles over against rival teachers. Ignatius put it strongly: 'it is clear that we must regard the bishop as the Lord himself' (*Ignatius to the Ephesians* 6.1; also see 3.2). At the end of the second century in his treatise against gnostic heresies, Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, appealed to the authority of bishops that derived from apostolic succession. He wrote:

> This is the true Gnosis: the teaching of the apostles, and the ancient institution of the church, spread throughout the entire world, and the distinctive mark of the body of Christ in accordance with the successions of bishops, to whom the apostles entrusted each local church, and the unfeigned preservation, coming down to us, of the scriptures, with a complete collection allowing for neither addition nor subtraction.
>
> *(*Against Heresies *4.33.8; see also 3.3.1–4; Grant 1997: 161)*

Finally, another unifying factor in second- and third-century Christianity was the emphasis of various bishops on basic creedal statements, most notably the 'rule of faith' that summarized central Christian beliefs. The 'rule of faith' found its more ardent advocates at the end of the second and beginning of the third centuries in the writings of Hippolytus, Tertullian, and Irenaeus. Church leaders saw the 'rule of faith' as having apostolic authority, and confirmed by the teachings of scripture. In his *Apostolic Tradition*, Hippolytus relates formulaic questions addressed to newly baptized members who were to be received into church membership: 'Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty? . . . Dost thou believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was born by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary?' (*Apostolic Tradition* 21–22; Stevenson 1957: 131). And Tertullian, writing for the faithful against heresies, states:

> Now, as to this rule of faith . . . it is, you must know, that which prescribes the belief that there is one only God, and that He is none other than the Creator of the world, who produced all things out of nothing through His own Word . . . that this Word is called His Son.
>
> *(*The Prescription of Heretics *13;* ANF *3: 249)*

Tertullian's 'rule of faith' goes on to include standard Christian notions regarding the virgin birth, the Spirit of God poured out in Jesus' ministry, the death and resurrection of Jesus, his ascension, the sending of the Spirit, and expectation of the second coming. He concludes: 'This rule, as it will be approved, was taught by Christ, and raises amongst ourselves no questions except those which heresies introduce, and which make men heretics.' Similarly, Irenaeus could write that the church 'has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith,' going on to describe the same kind of stock features of Christian belief found in Tertullian and Hippolytus. Irenaeus concludes:

> The church, having received this preaching, and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world . . . believes these points of doctrine just as if she had but one soul, and one and the same heart, and she proclaims them, and teaches them, and hands them down, with perfect harmony, as if she possessed only one mouth.
>
> *(*Against Heresies *1.2–3; Stevenson 1957: 115)*

Through use of a common set of scriptures, held together by a relatively unified group of bishops who advocated a generic rule of faith, Christians in the second and third centuries managed to maintain a sense of unity even amidst the significant diversity and the various debates that occupied Christians during this time. The sporadic persecutions suffered by Christians also served to forge a sense of unity and common purpose. These factors positioned Christian churches at the beginning of the fourth century to welcome the efforts of emperor Constantine to push for a unified Christian church that would aid in unifying the empire. The unity of tradition, of course, was in part the product of a revisionist memory, but a memory that second- and third-century Christian leaders sought collectively to hand on to those that followed.

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10

FROM CONSTANTINE TO THEODOSIUS (AND BEYOND)

Bill Leadbetter

The Great Persecution (303–311) and its consequences

Introduction

On 28 October 312, Constantine defeated his rival Maxentius just outside the city of Rome, across the Milvian Bridge (see Chapter 50). Constantine's troops bore an unusual emblem on their shields, probably the sign that we have come to know as the chi-rho, and before the battle they prayed together to the God of the Christians to grant them victory. Constantine entered Rome as victor on the field, but also as harbinger of an entirely new religious policy that would embrace Christianity as ferociously as Constantine's immediate predecessors had opposed it.

The Great Persecution began in 303 under Diocletian and his three fellow emperors (Maximian, Galerius and Constantius). It brought to an end a long peace in which the Church had both grown and prospered, alarming those most committed to the preservation of traditional values (De Labriolle 1942: 302–315; Barnes 1976; Judge 1983; Lane Fox 1986: 585–595; Leadbetter 2009: 119–127). Most prominent of these were the emperors themselves.

A series of edicts, each more severe than the last, demanded the submission of Christians to the imperial will (De Ste Croix 1954; Corcoran 1996: 179–182). These edicts were not enforced uniformly across the empire, but invited one of four responses from local Christian communities: compliance, defiance, flight and staying at home.

Popular Christianity exalted martyrdom (Brown 1981: 33–34; Lane Fox 1986: 434–450), and so some Christian communities found themselves violently divided amongst themselves, particularly in Rome, North Africa and Egypt. In the latter two, communal disagreements hardened into discrete schismatic communities. When Galerius brought persecution to an end in 311, he acknowledged the failure of repression in enforcing religious uniformity (Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 34.1). He did not note the unintended success of persecution in dividing Christian communities.

Rome

In Rome, Pope Marcellinus handed over the scriptures in obedience to the edict. Although he died late in 304, his successor Marcellus regarded this act as apostasy and he posthumously anathematized Marcellinus, removing his name from the official episcopal list. Many of the Christians in Rome

were angered and violence broke out. As a consequence, Marcellus was exiled and Rome remained without a bishop until the election of Miltiades in July 311 (Barnes 1981: 38).

Egypt

In Egypt, Peter the Bishop of Alexandria fled the city, while a number of other bishops were imprisoned leaving the Church without ecclesiastical leadership. This vacuum was filled by Meletius, the Bishop of Lycopolis (modern Assiut), who performed a number of ordinations, but without warrant from Peter. Imprisoned bishops complained of this to Peter, whose authority Meletius ceased to recognize. Instead, Meletius expanded his activities into Alexandria (Williams 1987: 32–41). The result was a polarized Christian communion. According to Epiphanius' account, two distinct communities now emerged, the 'Catholic Church', in communion with Peter and his successor Alexander, and Meletius' 'Church of the Martyrs' (*Panarion* 68.3.8). Although the difference between the two communities was one of Church order, rather than one of doctrine, it engendered a schism that persisted long past the deaths of both Peter and Meletius.

North Africa

Donatism began in similar circumstances (Barnes 1975: 17–20; Frend and Clancy 1977). The issue which split the African Church for generations was the status of those who had, whether genuinely or only apparently, handed over (*traditio*) scriptures to the Roman authorities in accordance with the imperial edicts. Those who had done so (*traditores*) were regarded by the Donatists as apostate and ordinations by *traditor* bishops were held to be invalid. A detailed description of the origins, character and fate of Donatism appears under the hand of Jakob Engberg in Chapter 44 of this volume.

Christianity becomes a political issue

The uneven enforcement of the edicts was a consequence of substantial disagreement amongst members of the empire's governing élite about the merits of the persecution. The fourth edict, issued early in 304 and ordering universal sacrifice, was never enforced in the western provinces of the empire (De Ste Croix 1954: 84–96; Corcoran 1996: 182). This disagreement went as high as the imperial college itself, which became increasingly fragmented.

In 303, when the persecution commenced, the empire was governed by not one emperor but four, Diocletian, Maximian, Constantius and Galerius, all working together in an ordered and hierarchical imperial college, bound by mutual loyalty (see Figure 10.1). While the empire was not formally divided between the four emperors, each tended to concentrate their efforts in particular regions.

Nevertheless, it remained a unity, cohering by virtue of the harmony (*concordia*) between the emperors, and bound by their loyalty to Diocletian. When the victory by Galerius over the Sassanid Persians in 298 CE was commemorated in an arch in Thessaloniki dedicated in 303 CE (see Figure 10.2), one of the reliefs depicted a joint sacrifice by Diocletian and Maximian (see Figure 10.3).

In 305, Diocletian and his colleague, Maximian, abdicated. Constantius became the nominal senior Augustus and Galerius, his junior. Galerius, however, had strengthened his own position, insofar as the new nominees to the Caesarship, Severus and Maximinus Daia, were loyal to him. Accordingly, the empire was more obviously divided between the two Augusti, with clearly delineated spheres of authority. Constantius took direct responsibility for Britain, Gaul and Spain; Severus for Italy, Africa and the Upper Danube; Galerius for the Balkan provinces and Asia Minor; and Maximinus for Syria, Egypt and Libya.

The arrangement worked well enough until Constantius died in July 306 in York, England. By his side was his son, Constantine, who was immediately proclaimed as emperor by his father's army

Figure 10.1 Statue of the Tetrarchs, now in Venice. Photo Bill Leadbetter

in that city. Anxious to avoid confrontation, Galerius compromised and accepted Constantine as his most junior colleague. Encouraged by Constantine's success in grafting himself into the imperial college, Maxentius, the son of Maximian, had himself proclaimed emperor in Rome. But there was no room for him; the college of four was full and Galerius declined to expand it. The *concordia* which had held Diocletian's empire together had vanished.

Christianity and imperial confrontation

Constantine seems to have been the first of the emperors to order a cessation of official hostilities and a restoration of property to the churches (Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* 24.9). This has been taken by some to mean that Constantine was already a Christian (Alföldi 1948: 8–9; Elliot 1987, 1989). This is unlikely. What is more probable is that Constantine was making a clear distinction between himself and his colleagues in the matter of religious policy (Barnes 1981: 28). The favour which he showed towards Christianity and Christians was in sharp contrast to the hostility with which they met in the remainder of the empire. He also found them a useful resource. At least one bishop, Ossius of Cordova, soon became one of his senior advisers. I offer a detailed discussion of Constantine's attitude to Christianity in Chapter 50 of this volume.

Figure 10.2 The Arch of Galerius in Thessaloniki, photographed in July 2015 at the time of a referendum on whether Greece should accept the terms of a European bailout, with the banner on the right declaring 'No'. Photo Philip F. Esler

Figure 10.3 Relief showing a sacrifice by Diocletian and Maximian on the Arch of Galerius in Thessaloniki. This scene, from the early fourth century CE, is one of the last representations of pagan sacrifice in Roman art. Photo Bill Leadbetter

Galerius attempts to re-impose uniformity

In 308, Galerius sought to renegotiate power-sharing arrangements at a conference at the city of Carnuntum. The most important consequence of this conference was the appointment of Licinius, one of his oldest friends, as Augustus in place of Severus. Otherwise it failed: Constantine and Maximinus were offended and Maxentius was passed over.

When Galerius died in 311 (having ordered in 306 the construction of a rotunda in Thessaloniki possibly intended as his mausoleum; Figure 10.4), his immediate heritage was a divided empire. On his deathbed, he decreed toleration for all Christians. This represented a victory for policies of toleration, but did nothing to unite his fractured realm. Galerius' death also ignited a struggle for mastery between the four remaining emperors: Maximinus in the east; Licinius in the Balkans; Maxentius in

Figure 10.4 The rotunda of Galerius in Thessaloniki. Photo Philip F. Esler

Italy and Africa; Constantine in Britain, Gaul and Spain. Constantine's victory over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge was his first step in reuniting the empire.

The political consequences of the 'conversion' of Constantine

The question of whether Constantine really converted to Christianity, and if so when, has continued to excite controversy, as I set out in Chapter 50. What does matter for present purposes, however, is the way in which Constantine came to frame a religious policy with significant political implications that did more than merely tolerate Christianity.

Constantine and Licinius

Immediately following his defeat of Maxentius, Constantine confirmed his policy of toleration in an edict issued from Rome in which he ordered the cessation of persecution everywhere (Corcoran 1996: 187). This order was principally directed at Maximinus, who initially complied. Some months afterwards, Constantine met with Licinius in the city of Milan. There, the alliance between the two was sealed by the marriage of Licinius to Constantine's sister Constantia (Pohlsander 1993). They also produced a document The Edict of Milan, which was enforced in the provinces that they ruled directly. This granted universal toleration and the restitution of all Christian property.

In Chapter 50, I set out the details of the developing relationship between Constantine and Licinius and I need only summarize them here. Licinius soon engaged Maximinus in war, defeated and eliminated him, and took control of his lands. His relationship with the churches at this time was soured by political disputes with Constantine. In 316 CE, Licinius lost his European provinces to Constantine. In 324 he was finally defeated and deposed. All hostility to the churches came to an end. Constantine marked his victory by the foundation of the city that came to bear his name. From its commencement, Constantinople was intended as an entirely Christian city. Churches, not temples, were founded there, although they were enriched by the plundered wealth of the pagan past.

Martyrs and saints

The Great Persecution bequeathed to the Christian churches a rich martyrological heritage. Graves of martyrs had become holy places to Christians by the late third century (Brown 1981: 33–34) and the Great Persecution provided a context for martyr narratives. The traditions that these generated are rich and varied. St George, the patron saint of England, was slain at the order of Diocletian; St Demetrius, the saint of Thessaloniki, at the order of Maximian (probably meaning Galerius). Other military saints emerged, both real and fanciful: St Theagenes, St Theodore the slayer of a dragon, St Procopius (Delehaye 1909).

Moreover, while the Great Persecution did not occasion the invention of the genre of hagiography, it did provide an enormous amount of subject matter. The stories of martyrs were told and retold, written and rewritten (with advantages) to edify believers. To the compilers of such *acta*, historicity was far less an issue than moral value, although some stories may preserve valuable information (Barnes 1982: 176–180).

In essence, a new, and specifically Christian, mythology was being crafted. The Christian poet Prudentius recognized this quite explicitly in the late fourth century when he produced an epic poem *On the Crowns of the Martyrs* (*Peristephanon Liber*) which rewrote hagiography as Latin poetry (Palmer 1989; Roberts 1993). Four of the martyrs whom he commemorated in verse: St Eulalia, St Vincent, St Quirinus and St Romanus were victims of the Great Persecution.

In providing the Christian community with mythology of martyrdom, the Great Persecution also created a new sacred geography and a rich vocabulary of ordeal. The suffering of its victims (real or imagined) sanctified new places, which were, in turn, embellished and decorated by new generations of Christian patrons.

Constantine and the Church

In my profile of Constantine in Chapter 50 of this volume I expand in some detail upon his relationship with the churches. He became an active patron and benefactor of Christianity, although not in such a way as to offend pagan sentiment unduly. He subsidized the Church and exempted Christian clergy from civic duties, possibly as early as 313 CE. He also began involving himself in intra-Christian disputes such as Donatism and Arianism. In Chapter 50, I have set out details of the active interest which Constantine took in these controversies. He also began to strip the Jews of some of the privileges they had hitherto enjoyed and there is equivocal evidence that he banned sacrifice.

Above all, he began the construction of vast edifices for Christian worship, such as the churches of St John Lateran, St Peter's on the Vatican Hill (which involved a huge earth moving project), Santa Croce in Gerusalemme and St Lawrence-outside-the-walls.

Constantine's achievement

Although the question of the personal conversion of Constantine remains controversial, his public adoption of Christianity had profound effects. For the Church itself, the emperor became a new source of authority. Constantine's involvement with ecclesiastical matters intensified as the years went on. He established a role for himself as the arbiter and enforcer of doctrine, and also claimed the role of 'bishop of those outside the Church'. At the time of his death he was preparing for an expedition against Persia which featured the apparatus of a holy war (Barnes 1985).

To Christians such as Eusebius, he was the new Moses, who had led the Church from servitude into the promised land of established power and recognition. In an oration, he compared Constantine's court to that of God in Heaven, using the traditional language of mimesis to develop an extended simile of Constantine as the vicegerent of the Lord. Within the empire as a whole, moreover, Constantine intensified a process of change which can, in retrospect, be labelled 'christianization'.

The christianization of the empire

The new attractions of Christianity

The conversion of Constantine did not make Rome a Christian empire, nor could it. The emperor neither mandated Christianity for his subjects, nor abandoned the traditional pagan language and iconography of coin portraits. He retained the imperial cult and the title of *pontifex maximus*. After his death, he received apotheosis from the Roman Senate. Constantine's conversion does, nevertheless, show an intensification and acceleration of a process which had commenced with the apostles.

For three centuries, the Church had existed outside the continuum of ancient society. Becoming a Christian had meant an instinctual separation from the social world of classical culture. As a proscribed group, Christians lived within a subculture vulnerable to external attack and internal subversion through heresy. As such, they had existed at the mercy of neighbours who feared them, and blamed them when disaster fell.

Constantine's own generosity towards the Church sent an unambiguous signal to his people. The gulf between the Church and its social environment had been bridged: becoming a Christian ought no longer to invite fear, suspicion and rejection. It was a signal that was amplified by the stratagem that he employed to pay for this patronage: the pillage of the treasuries of the temples.

The attractions of wealth

Soon after Constantine had secured control of the east, and simultaneous with his intervention in the Arian controversy, trusted operatives were dispersed to inspect and confiscate the riches that had been accumulated by the gods. Works of art were remitted to Constantine's new city on the

Bosporus. Deprived of their contexts, they served instead to advertise the scale of Constantine's victory over the past. Bullion, gilding, jewels, the thank-offerings of the gods' grateful clients, now provided the foundation for the historic wealth of the Church.

This redistribution of resources sent a powerful but unspoken message to contemporaries. The traditional religion of the empire had been cut loose from imperial patronage; its place in the social and political fabric of society was no longer integral. For its part, the newly wealthy Church was able to call upon vast sums in its work of charity. The Church had traditionally supported those of its members who were marginal within classical society: widows and orphans, the infirm and the destitute. The scale of support which the Church could now offer drew many new adherents.

Charity was not the only benefit that the Church could impart to its members. Constantine endowed the Church with legal privileges. The exemption of clergy from the performance of civic duties was a powerful enticement to men of the curial class. Every town in the Roman empire was regulated and administered by a council (*curia*) of local aristocrats, named after the Curia in Rome (see Figure 10.5), who formed a class, the *curiales*, which had long borne the weight of local patronage and civic duty. For decades, they had complained of this enforced burden. In the years of Diocletian and Constantine, this became even more onerous since the revenue bases of the cities themselves had collapsed as a consequence of the period of sustained inflation during the third century.

In exempting the clergy from curial duty, Constantine provided a powerful inducement for aristocrats to engage in the public life of the Church. Such an inducement was rendered all the more enticing by the legislation that recognized the juridical authority of a bishop. Such legislation encouraged *curiales* to pursue an ecclesiastic career since it provided status without making burdensome financial demands. Towards the end of Constantine's life, his biographer Eusebius complained of the numbers of people who had come into the Church for the wrong reasons, and who counterfeited a faith for the sake of convenience and advancement (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 4.54.2).

A new dynasty

Constantine also encouraged his immediate family to embrace Christianity. His mother Helena had become a Christian, possibly before Constantine himself (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 3.47);

Figure 10.5 The Curia, or Senate House, in Rome. Photo Bill Leadbetter

his eldest son, Crispus, received a Christian tutor (Jerome, *De viris illustribus* [*On Famous Men*] 80). At some point too, the elderly Eutropia, widow of Maximian, became a Christian (Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2.4.6). Constantine's younger sons were all raised as Christians; his half-brothers and their families likewise. Constantine's half-brother, Julius Constantius was married to the Christian lady Basilina, and their sons, Gallus and Julian received a Christian education (Vogt 1963: 50f.). Of Constantine's half-sisters, Constantia was a pious lady who favoured the Arians, and apparently was a source of advice to them at Nicaea (Pohlsander 1993).

The conversion of Constantine's family ensured that the faith would be passed on to the next generation. Constantine's sons were all faithful men who sought to play their parts in Church affairs; likewise the daughters of the next generation, Eusebia, Constantina and Helena. Of his surviving nephews, Gallus remained devout; Julian, who despised his family, rejected their faith.

A new aristocracy

The imperial family stood at the apex of the social pyramid of the empire. Immediately below them came the families of the senatorial aristocracy of Rome (and later of Constantinople), and the curial families of the empire's cities. The Roman aristocracy proved most resistant to religious change (Arnheim 1972: 50f.) Notable individuals certainly did convert to Christianity (Alföldi 1948: 118f.), although not in great numbers. If the men of the Roman aristocracy clung to their traditions, the women who bore and married them did not. There is good evidence that, at least from the beginning of the fourth century, Christianity gained a firm footing in the households of the aristocracy from the increasing adherence of aristocratic women (Brown 1961). They became the patrons and supporters of the Church. Moreover, such patronage and support was increasingly solicited by clergy. Pope Damasus (366–384) was nicknamed 'the ear-tickler' from his frequent attendance upon such potential donors (*Collectio Avellana* 1.10). Indeed, by 370, the emperors had written to Pope Damasus forbidding clerics to attend upon widows and female wards, and from privately receiving bequests from their estates (*Theodosian Code* 16.2.20).

The Roman aristocracy, however, were only briefly of more than symbolic importance in the political affairs of the late empire. The locus of power had shifted from Rome long before. In 330, Constantine dedicated a new city on the Bophorus. Called Constantinople after its founder, it became the regular residence of Roman emperors in the east. Constantine not only adorned it with stolen art treasures but also with a senatorial class of its own. It has been asserted that when this class was recruited, preference was given to Christian curiales (Alföldi 1948: 115). There is some evidence to support this. One of its first luminaries, Flavius Ablabius, was a Christian. Honoratus, the first Urban Prefect of Constantinople, was entrusted by Constantius II with the arbitration of ecclesiastical disputes (Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2.4.1; Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.23.3). The Christianity of members of this class may not have run especially deep. Domitius Modestus, who succeeded Honoratus as urban prefect, was a Christian under Constantius, a pagan under Julian, and an Arian Christian under Valens (Jones *et al*. 1971: 608). It can, however, be stated with some confidence that by the end of the century the Constantinopolitan élite was largely Christian (Liebeschuetz 1990: 140–145).

Bishops, monks and nuns

A new élite was also emerging parallel to the senatorial class. In the world of traditional, polytheistic religion, official priestly tasks had always been performed by the city curiales. Only in rare cases did individual cults have a dedicated priesthood; otherwise the social and spiritual worlds of classical cities were profoundly integrated. The sectarian origins of Christianity, however, determined a different kind of priesthood: one that existed separate from and parallel to secular society. Accordingly, in its first three centuries, the churches were compelled to define and develop an authority structure as a consequence of internal conflict over doctrine.

Bishops exercised an authority that was divinely given and transmitted through the laying on of hands (Clement, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 44.1–5). They acted as monarchs within their own community. When those communities were small and marginal, the realm of episcopal power was tiny indeed. As the power and the scope of the Church grew, so did that of its rulers. While it is impossible to quantify the number of people who identified as Christians after 312, the qualitative evidence suggests that increasing numbers of ordinary folk were joining the churches (Brown 1978: 57f.; Frend 1984: 434–452). Such people looked to their bishops and clergy as sources of more than ecclesiastical authority.

This was a process which was given impetus by the progressive privileging of the Church in the legislation of Constantine and Constantius II. An early law of Constantine's empowered bishops to superintend the manumission of slaves (*Code of Justinian* 1.13.1); another awarded legal competence to episcopal courts, even as courts of appeal on secular matters (*Theodosian Code* 1.27.1). Such a civic function could only enhance the role of the bishop as an ecclesiastical aristocrat. Great sees became the focus of intense competition between ambitious clergy (MacMullen 1990: 266f.). In 366, the rivalry between two claimants for the see of Rome led to violence and massacre (Ammianus Marcellinus 27.3.12–15). For most of Athanasius' tenure of the see of Alexandria, he had to contend with a rival bishop (Barnes 1993: 19). The prize was worth it. Bishops of great sees, like Athanasius and Ambrose, could dare to lecture emperors. On a less elevated level, such bishops controlled the purse-strings of charity. As patrons of the poor, they assumed a peculiar burden of euergetism that brought them an enhanced civic status (Brown 1992: 90–103).

Simultaneous with the privileging of the formal rulers of the Church, there arose the less formal, and more charismatic, spiritual élite of holy men and women. Even before the victory of Constantine, Christians had withdrawn into the desert to pursue an ascetic and individual holiness. In both Syria and Egypt in particular, the wildernesses became richly peopled with those who rejected the civic life for a rigorously applied pursuit of the divine (Chitty 1966). For local communities blessed with the propinquity of such a holy person, there was a ready-made arbiter of disputes. For obdurate pagans, here was a spiritual athlete to whom surrender was no disgrace (Brown 1971, 1995: 55–78).

A new army

From the eve of the battle of the Milvian Bridge, Constantine used the army as a vehicle for his new approach to religion. The prayers that Constantine ordered his soldiers to pray before battle turned his armies into instruments of divine will as well as imperial policy. He gave Christian officers preference in promotion (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 4.52), and ensured that his troops were provided with spiritual support. The field tent he set aside for his private devotions became a mobile chapel with a staff of clergy who functioned as military chaplains (Jones 1953; Helgeland 1978: 813f) and he ordered Sunday as a festal day for his soldiers (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 4.18–19).

The army, however, was not a particularly malleable institution (Jones 1963: 23f.; Macmullen 1984: 45–49). It had long been a place of religious diversity, but soldiers were nevertheless reminded of the religious convictions of the state whenever they received their pay. Soon after Constantine's victory over Licinius, the figure of the deity *Sol Invictus* disappeared from Constantine's coinage. With some minor exceptions, this ended the routine appearance of deities on the coinage and, thereafter, Christian motifs predominated (Bruun 1958, 1962, 1966: 61–64).

By the time Julian came to publicly abandon Christianity in 351 CE, the army was, at least superficially, Christian. While he claimed that most of the troops with him were faithful to the gods (*Letter* 38), such a claim might have been more rhetorical than real. There were certainly a great many Christians in the eastern legions that he inherited after the death of Constantius II, and some of these refused to heed his new religious policy (Jones 1963: 25). Two standard-bearers refused to remove the *labarum* from the standards of their legions or to perform sacrifices and were beheaded for their obstinacy (Bowersock 1978: 107).

Significantly, Julian did not purge the senior ranks of the army. A Christian tradition that the later emperor Valentinian was punished for clinging to his faith (see Jones *et al.* 1971: 933) must be dismissed as a pious fiction (Nixon 1997). Christian generals who had served under Constantius retained their rank and duties under Julian, most notably Arintheus and Victor, who actively participated in the conclave of generals after Julian's death (Ammianus Marcellinus 25.5.2).

After Julian's death in 363 CE, pagan officers and men continued to serve (Tomlin 1998), retaining rank and prominence. The household commander, Dagalaifus, held commands under Valentinian, and served a consulship in 366 (Jones *et al.* 1971: 239). One of Julian's closest advisers, Salutius Secundus, was both a prominent pagan and, following Julian's death, proposed as his successor by the conclave of officers (Ammianus Marcellinus 25.5.3). He refused, but continued to hold office under Jovian and Valentinian (Jones *et al.* 1971: 814–817). The Manichaean Sebastianus held commands under Constantius II, Julian, Valentinian and Valens (Tomlin 1998: 37). Perhaps the most famous military pagan was Ammianus Marcellinus who had served under both Constantius II and Julian. By the beginning of the fifth century, most of the army's senior officers were Christians, although with egregious exceptions like Arbogast and Fravitta (Jones 1963: 25; Tomlin 1998).

A new emperor

As priests and rulers, the emperors of Rome had always acted as guarantors of the relationship between the Romans and their gods. It was in service of this that such traditionalists as Decius, Valerian and Diocletian had assaulted the Church (Leadbetter 1996). The immediate impact upon the imperial office of Constantine's conversion was in his immediate exercise of religious authority on behalf of the churches, both in seeking to settle disputes and in promoting Christianity to the pagan world. This had its own consequences both for Constantine's perception of his own role as Christian emperor and also for Christian understandings of what the empire was, and its place in human history.

A new theology of power became essential. Eusebius of Caesarea provided an influential and coherent model. In a speech in praise of Constantine, Eusebius portrayed the emperor as the earthly counterpart of the divine logos, just as monarchy was the earthly counterpart of monotheism (*In Praise of Constantine* 2–5; Baynes 1934; Fowden 1993: 87–89). Eusebius was careful, using language that was acceptable both to Christian and non-Christian ears alike (Drake 1976: 57). If Constantine was content with this degree of ambiguity, his successors made the new theology of power overt and explicit.

An implication can readily be drawn here. In this model, the emperor must display an exemplary piety. Religious controversialists like Athanasius and political bishops like Ambrose exploited this in pursuit of their ecclesiastical objectives. Constantius II was reviled as antichrist and persecutor for his Arianism (Barnes 1993: 106); the impeccably Catholic Theodosius I suffered the censure of Ambrose for sanctioning atrocities (Ambrose, *Epistle* 41, 51; Matthews 1975: 232–236).

For Constantine, however, piety and policy combined. He famously claimed to be the 'bishop of those outside the Church'. That included those outside the empire as well, and in his later years Constantine developed links with the Christians of Persia while he prepared to launch what amounted to a holy war upon their Zoroastrian rulers (Barnes 1985; Fowden 1993: 93–98). While Constantine's successors did not necessarily share his zeal for missionary imperialism, they were all compelled to assume an egregious piety. None could ignore Christian controversy. The empire was now God's land.

A new landscape

One factor that enabled this new ideology to prosper was its incorporation into the rhythms of everyday life. By the end of the fourth century, Jerome could claim that Christian basilicas were

richly peopled with worshippers, while the temples of the old gods provided shelter only for owls and spiders (Epistle 107; see Tomlin 1998: 21). While such a claim is rhetorical, it does underscore the fact that a new and profoundly Christian sense of place was emerging.

This is especially evident in the part played in civic life by the dead. In the classical city, the dead had been removed from the city. Cemeteries were outside the walls: the remains housed there contaminated those who touched them (Brown 1981: 1–22). To Christians, graves were holy places; the corpses of the martyrs conferred merit. Even before the legalization of Christianity, tombs of martyrs had become centres of worship, and their mortal remains had become sacred relics. Individual sites of devotion emerged, as a more generalized cult of the saints also developed. As the reach of Christianity grew, it even became necessary to export sanctity by translating relics to new Church communities (Markus 1990: 94f.).

When Constantine and his successors came to act as patrons of the Church, many of the new houses of worship that they constructed were over the tombs of such saints. In Rome, St Peter, St Paul and St Lawrence were honoured with great basilicas. These new cathedrals in Rome, and elsewhere, shifted the balance of civic life. Traditional religion had been incorporated into the physical heart of the city. Christianity shifted this focus to the urban fringes.

Beyond those fringes, the villages and towns of the countryside could boast the sanctity either of their own martyrs or the presence of holy people. It was not only the martyred dead whose touch and prayer could confer sanctity. Holy men and women, prayerful ascetics, whether in community or alone, provided a tangible mediation between sinful humanity and the eternal Kingdom of God. Where once hills and groves had been holy places, now it was islands, caves or even pillars.

Sacred history so tinged the province of Palestine, where Christianity began and where so many of the stories of the Bible are set, that it became *terra sancta* – 'the Holy Land'. Pilgrims now came from the highest echelons. Constantine's mother Helena and his mother-in-law, Eutropia, set the fashion, recovering the True Cross, founding churches (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 3.41) and complaining about the pagans of Mamre (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 3.51). Wealthy pilgrims came by ship and road from the ends of the empire, and even from outside it. They came to experience the land of the Bible (Hunt 1982: 50–82) and some, even, to stay. Jerome settled in Bethlehem while his arch-rival Rufinus made his home in Jerusalem.

This new geography of holiness formed a new and complex Christian map (Markus 1990: 151–155). Constantine's churches rose as defunded temples fell into decay. Below the Church altars lay the relics of the martyred heroes of Christian mythology whose sanctity was shared by local and pilgrim alike. The countryside too was populated with living martyrs – holy men and women – simultaneously in and outside the world. This embedded christianization does much to explain the strength of the Church's position when it came under challenge from a pagan revival.

The persistence of paganism

Introduction

Constantine did not make Rome Christian. Traditional religion could not be so easily discarded. While many eagerly embraced the new faith, others were energized to defend tradition and reassert ancient values. The strength of traditional religion in the army has already been discussed, but it was only one of several institutions in which paganism persisted with grim vigour. Likewise, in civilian society, philosophers, aristocrats, municipal élites and agricultural labourers maintained their traditions tenaciously, even in the face of overt government hostility. For a brief moment, the reign of Julian gave such folk hope that devastated temples might be restored, and traditional worship returned to the centre of the social and civic life of the empire.

Julian (c. 331–363 CE) and the survival of paganism

Julian's career (see Chapter 60) illustrates both the strength of pagan survival and also its weakness. Born in Constantinople into the Christian imperial family, Julian's father, eldest bother, uncles and cousins were slaughtered in the massacre which marked the accession of Constantine's sons. Julian and his brother Gallus were brought up at isolated properties in an atmosphere of superstition and fear. His rejection of his family's Christianity was a personal one, made fairly early in his life (Browning 1976: 40–47; MacMullen 1984: 71). It was, however, made possible by one of the ambiguities of christianization: the educational syllabus (*paideia*) that a young man was taught remained unchanged. Whatever the teacher's religion, the core texts remained Homer, Virgil and the classics of traditional literature. Julian had able teachers and access to a vast library. Moreover, as he grew older, he was also able to take advantage of the wisdom of the pagan Sophists of Athens.

Pagan intellectuals

Constantine and his successors did not dispense with the services of able men. There were prominent pagans at the courts of the emperors in senior, if vulnerable, positions. The pagan sophist Sopater enjoyed the patronage of Constantine until brought down by Ablabius, the Christian Praetorian Prefect (Eunapius, *Lives of the Sophists* 462–463). Constantius II employed the philosopher Eustathius on diplomatic missions (Eunapius, *Lives of the Sophists* 465–466) and the rhetorician Themistius prospered at his court, becoming the principal publicist of Constantius' rule (Vanderspoel 1995) and entrusted with the critical task of expanding the Constantinopolitan Senate from 300 to 2,000 members.

While some intellectuals converted to Christianity through genuine conviction, most notably Firmicus Maternus and Marius Victorinus (Leadbetter 1998a), others remained hostile to the Constantinian settlement and sought to reverse it. Eunapius, a recusant himself, whose vigorous loathing of Constantine is reflected in the pages of Zosimus' history, compiled a series of brief biographies of such people, all intellectuals (Momigliano 1963: 95–97; Blockley 1981: 1–26). The most noteworthy of these was Libanius, whose lectures in Nicomedia Julian had been forbidden to attend. A rhetorician and Antiochene aristocrat, he not only taught some of the best minds of his age – both Christian and pagan – but also published his correspondence and speeches. He was a warrior for tradition, on one occasion pleading the case for the toleration of traditional worship to Theodosius in the mid 380s. In this speech (*Oration* 30), Libanius pleaded that the temples be protected from Christian vigilantes. It was a brave speech, made to one who was a bitter foe of his faith.

The army and administration

Julian's ascent to power was through the army. The west had been ruled after Constantine's death by his son, Constans. In 350, he was dethroned and killed by a cabal of his officers and replaced with a general named Magnentius. Magnentius was generally tolerant of pagan practice (MacMullen 1984: 48; Barnes 1993: 102). He partially reversed the ban on sacrifice, permitting their performance at night (*Theodosian Code* 16.10.5). While this was the policy of a usurper trying to appeal for support to particular interest groups (he also attracted the support of Athanasius), it does indicate that he considered pagans to be worth courting.

After Constantius' defeat of Magnentius, he sent Julian to Gaul to guard the Rhine frontier. There, Julian found kindred spirits amongst the cadre of western officers and was encouraged by the number of pagans whom he found in the army. After he had been proclaimed emperor by his legions in 360 CE, he met many more who had worn their Christianity lightly: Pegasius, Bishop of Ilium, had kept the fires of sacrifice burning to the ancient heroes of the Trojan War (Chuvin 1990: 40–42); the aristocrat Domitius Modestus, who had held high office under Constantius, apostatized

and was rewarded with the city prefecture of Constantinople; the sophist Hecebolius who had taught Julian likewise abandoned his faith. Both men returned to the Church after Julian's demise (Bowder 1978: 103).

The paganism of the countryside

Julian's religion was intellectual rather than popular, so he was unable to appeal to traditional paganism where it was strongest. Although temples had been robbed of their riches, they were still the centre of ritual (Libanius, *Or.* 30.6), and although sacrifice had been forbidden, people in the countryside continued to celebrate festivals by a communal feast of meat (*Or.* 30. 17–19). Christianity had made considerable impact in cities, but its influence in the countryside was patchy. It was strong in North Africa (Jones 1963: 18f.) and the Nile valley (Frankfurter 1998: 265–284), for example, but much of the countryside of Italy and Gaul was still resolutely pagan. So too was most of the population of Sardinia and, in Palestine, the inhabitants of Gaza (Jones 1963: 18–19; Macmullen 1984: 81; Chuvin 1990: 76–80). In Egypt, pagan names survived in some numbers amongst the liturgical class (Borkowski 1990). While Coptic was increasingly employed as a Christian liturgical language, the traditional cults still tenaciously persisted (Frankfurter 1998: 257–264).

These instances of paganism were not survivals, but continuities. Although Christianity offered a way to reframe belief patterns, many of the rural population did not see the point and the rhythms of rural life continued as they had for centuries. Such people were not warriors for paganism like Julian or Libanius, but they offered a resistance to Christianity that was more trenchant, more stolid and more enduring.

The failure of Julian

Julian's early death in 363 CE is only a symbolic marker of his failure. Far more revealing is the reception of the edict of 362 CE in which he forbade Christian rhetoricians from teaching the pagan classics. This drew criticism even from some of his pagan supporters (Ammianus Marcellinus 22.20.7; 25.4.20). The large number of Christian teachers who were now disbarred from practising their profession indicates the strength of Christianity amongst the empire's intellectuals (Jones 1963: 30–31). After his death, this was one of the first measures to be reversed (Markus 1974: 2–4).

The opposition to this measure indicates just how deeply Christianity had dug itself into the structures of the empire. Julian's own approach had been to confront this by making traditional cult socially indistinguishable from Christianity (Chuvin 1990: 46–48; Nicholson 1991). His failure may well have lain in that choice of strategy. Had he embraced the less austere paganism of the peasants, and emphasized festival over ritual, the outcome might have been very different.

Paganism in the Roman aristocracy

Julian's natural supporters were in the senatorial aristocracy of Rome. Here paganism was as much a matter of civic pride as conviction. Some prospered under Julian's rule: Vettius Agorius Praetextatus was appointed to the governorship of Achaea (Ammianus Marcellinus 22.7.6). Praetextatus held numerous priestly offices and was later depicted as an interlocutor in the pagan dinner party at the heart of Macrobius' *Saturnalia*. He might have prospered under any emperor. He retained his governorship under Valentinian, persuading him not to enforce in Achaea his edict prohibiting nocturnal sacrifices (Zosimus, *New History* 4.3.3). He restored the Portico of the 'Consenting Gods' (*Dii Consentes* (Figure 10.6)), the last piece of pagan construction in the Roman Forum and subsequently held office as Prefect of Rome and Praetorian Prefect of Illyricum, Italy and Africa.

Figure 10.6 The Portico of the *Dii Consentes*. Constructed in 367, it was the last pagan structure built in the Roman Forum. Photo Bill Leadbetter

Not all aristocratic families were so obstinate. The Anicii, famed for both ancestry and avarice, became Christian during the reign of Constantine (Novak 1979: 291). Others took a little longer, but in 382, it was plausibly claimed that Christian senators were in the majority (Ambrose, *Epistles* 17.10; 18.8ff). Many of these, however, barely attended meetings. Of those families that dominated the Senate in the late fourth century, most were pagan.

For Constantine's immediate successors, this hardly mattered. They left the senatorial aristocracy largely unmolested. Constantius, for example, explicitly preferred talent over religious conviction and, during his visit to Rome in 357, even nominated successors to the vacancies in a number of priestly colleges (Symmachus, *Relatio* 3.7; Cameron 1968: 98f.). Valentinian, who ruled in the west after the death of Julian, was famously tolerant (Ammianus Marcellinus 30.9.5).

Gratian, politics and the senate (375–383 CE)

In 375, however, Valentinian suddenly died and was succeeded by his teenage son, Gratian. Gratian's succession was guaranteed by his uncle, Valens, who ruled the eastern half of the empire, but was complicated by the nomination of his four-year-old half-brother, Valentinian II. Gratian accepted his brother's elevation and, by virtue of his age, he remained the senior emperor in the west (Matthews 1975: 64; Sivan 1993: 120).

Gratian's tutor was the Gallic rhetorician, Ausonius. Of aristocratic temperament, he was a correspondent of the great pagan senator Symmachus. At the time of Valentinian's death, relations between imperial office and Senate were at a low point. Valentinian had little time for aristocrats and had preferred to promote military men to high office (Alföldi 1952; Matthews 1975: 56–63). The accession of the 16-year-old Gratian brought to power a group of courtly Christians who resented

this military caste. As aristocrats and intellectuals, they sought to defend the prerogatives of men of their own class. They sought rapprochement with the alienated Senate; senators dutifully praised the accession of Gratian as the dawn of a new age (Matthews 1975: 66–67, 1989: 273; Sivan 1993: 125f.).

During his first years, Gratian's court was based at distant Trier in the Mosel valley. Offices were held by allies and connections of Ausonius. In 378, however, things changed dramatically. Gratian's uncle Valens, emperor in the east, was slain in battle with the Goths at Adrianople along with two-thirds of his field army and most of his high command. It was a military calamity of epic proportions that required a firm response from Gratian. He returned to his father's military cadre, appointing Theodosius as the military commander to deal with the crisis, and then as emperor in the east (Matthews 1975: 93–98; see also Sivan 1993: 121f.).

In 381, the imperial court settled at Milan, in proximity to the city's forthright bishop, Ambrose (see Chapter 57 of this volume for a detailed profile of this remarkable man). Ambrose was a warrior for Nicene orthodoxy against the strong community of Arians in north Italy. In 378, he dedicated the first volume of his polemic against Arianism to Gratian, and sought to win him as a partisan. Like Ausonius, Ambrose was an aristocrat. His father had been Praetorian Prefect in Gaul under Constantine II who may have been executed after Constantine's defeat (Jones *et al.* 1971: 51, n. 1). Ambrose himself had followed a steady civil career, largely with the support of the great Christian senator, Petronius Probus, until he was suddenly and unexpectedly elected Bishop of Milan in 374 (Paulinus, *Life of Ambrose* 2, 3–5, 8).

Despite the similarity in their backgrounds, the approaches of Ambrose and Ausonius to religious matters were diametrically opposed. Ausonius' literary works show a Christian who was much at home in the classical world. Ambrose by contrast was a warrior engaged in spiritual and political combat with Arianism, and who consistently sought alliance with the emperor (Rousseau 1996).

Early in 380, Ambrose was invited to instruct Gratian in matters of faith. From this point on, the young emperor became increasingly inclined to intervene in religious matters. This intervention was initially in defence of Christian orthodoxy, but Gratian then turned his attention to the pagan symbols of Rome. In so doing, he launched the first determined assault on the paganism of the leaders of the aristocracy. Amongst his decisions were the removal of state subsidies for traditional priestly cults (including the Vestal Virgins, who now lost their government-funded allowances), the removal of the Statue of Victory in the Senate House, and (critically) his repudiation of the title of *pontifex maximus* which had been borne by all emperors since Augustus (*Theodosian* Code 16.10.20; Zosimus, *New History* 4.36; Cameron 1968).

In assuming this interventionist policy, Gratian was rejecting the broad policy of tolerance which had marked the reigns of Constantius II, Valentinian and his own earlier years. Other emperors had tampered with these symbols, but not permanently: Constantius II had removed the Altar of Victory from the Senate House (Symmachus, *Relatio* 3.4), but this had been reversed by Julian. Furthermore, Gratian was disinclined even to hear appeals from even distinguished pagan senators for a return to tolerance. On several occasions, Symmachus sought an audience with the emperor, but was refused (Symmachus, *Relatio* 3.2). The abandonment of the title of *pontifex maximus* was especially significant. The office had been a vestige of the pagan empire and once it had been rejected by a Christian emperor, it could not be employed again (Cameron 1968: 97). Moreover, the cessation of state subsidies for pagan religion (of more immediate concern to Symmachus) could never, for the same reason, be restored.

Theodosius and the triumph of Catholic orthodoxy

Introduction

Gratian was overthrown in 383 in a military conspiracy. His murderers were all Christians, and their nominee was the aggressively orthodox Magnus Maximus. An officer of Spanish origin, Maximus had served with Theodosius' father in Britain and in Africa (Ammianus Marcellinus 27.8.1ff; 29.5.6).

Gratian had appointed him to a senior military command in Britain (Jones *et al*. 1971: 588) and it was from here that he rebelled, seizing the British, Spanish and Gallic provinces while the 13-year-old Valentinian II held the Balkans, Italy and Africa.

Maximus' usurpation did not immediately split the empire. Theodosius tolerated it and Maximus gave no immediate indication of designs upon Valentinian II's lands. Remaining in the north with his court in Trier, he concentrated upon the imperial duty of guarding the Gallic provinces, a duty he performed well enough.

Emperors and heretics

The accession of Theodosius, together with the more interventionist polices of Gratian mark a new stage in the involvement of the emperor in ecclesiastical disputation. Although Constantius II and Valens had been partisan in the Arian controversy, neither emperor had actually moved to criminalize what they perceived to be heresy. Political bishops like Athanasius had suffered exile, but no law defined and made orthodoxy obligatory. Every emperor ruling in the generation after Adrianople was obliged to make a decision about the direction of religious policy and the relations between Church and State.

Magnus Maximus and the Priscillianists

In 379, Gratian had issued an edict in which he formally reiterated the prohibition on heresy, and expressed the pious wish that it would cease everywhere. Beyond this, however, he would not go (*Theodosian Code* 16.5.5). As such, Gratian was following a policy set by his predecessors. Magnus Maximus changed all this. When the Priscillianist controversy arose, his intervention went far beyond that of Gratian.

Priscillian was a Spanish aristocrat who became a Christian in the 370s. Independently minded, he formulated a theology much of which is still unclear. What is evident is that his views were egalitarian, ascetic and bore affinities to Gnosticism (Matthews 1975: 161–170; Chadwick 1976; Frend 1984: 711–713). These proved extremely popular amongst the aristocratic communities of Gaul and Spain, and thus provided the movement with a wealthy and literate laity. In 380, an ecclesiastical council in Saragossa condemned some Priscillianist teachings, but not the man himself. Priscillian was consecrated Bishop of Avila in 381, but, pursued by ecclesiastical enemies, he fled Spain and sought support in Gaul and northern Italy (Frend 1984: 712). Gratian responded by formally exiling all heretics (Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicle* 2.47.6; Matthews 1975: 163). Priscillian and his followers instead went on a missionary tour in southern Gaul and Italy. Although they were not received by either Pope Damasus or Ambrose, they were able to lobby Macedonius, the Master of Offices (Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicle* 2.48.5; 49.3). He procured official toleration for the Priscillianists, who returned to Spain in triumph. Their chief persecutors, in turn, fled from Spain.

At this point, however, the government changed. Gratian was overthrown; Magnus Maximus succeeded to the relevant provinces. Eager to proclaim his religious affiliation, he received baptism soon after his proclamation, a matter which he stressed in an extant letter to Pope Siricius (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 35.90–91; Matthews 1975: 165; Nixon 1987: 83). Priscillian's enemies hastened to Maximus' court to seek his support, which was duly given. Maximus called a council at Bordeaux which re-anathematized Priscillianism. Priscillian appealed directly to the emperor but failed at trial and was sentenced to death. Maximus did not intervene and, as a consequence, Priscillian and a number of his supporters were executed (Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicle* 2.50.7). Others were exiled.

The executions were not accomplished naively. Maximus was fully aware of what they portended. He defended himself to the Pope by asserting that he was a defender of the Church, and the executions had been performed in accordance with that duty; that the Priscillianists had not

been Christians, but Manichaeans; and that his action had prevented schism (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 35.90–91). But the genie was out of the bottle; Christians had been executed by Christians for holding heterodox views.

Valentinian II and the Altar of Victory

After the death of Gratian, the 13-year-old Valentinian II had come to live in Milan. The principal figure at his court was his formidable, and Arian, mother Justina. In 384, not long after their arrival in the city, a despatch was received from the courtly and eloquent Aurelius Symmachus, Prefect of Rome. In it, Symmachus reported, and endorsed, a resolution of the Senate which had asked for the restoration of the Altar of Victory to the Senate House. The letter (Symmachus, *Relatio* 3) is an eloquent plea for pluralism, tolerance and a bold assertion of the historic value of traditional religion to the empire.

Symmachus' arguments were anticipated by Ambrose who wrote to the emperor (Ambrose, *Epistle* 17), reminding him that pagans had never been so tolerant and exhorted him to act as a Christian emperor should. Upon formal receipt of Symmachus' petition, Ambrose wrote again to Gratian (*Epistle* 18) in which he responded to Symmachus' arguments. Ambrose ridiculed traditional paganism and reminded his audience of the persecution of the Church. Moreover, asserted Ambrose, the meeting of the Senate which had passed the resolution supported by Symmachus had been packed with pagans; the majority of senators were in fact Christian.

The debate was a polite one. The polemic was no more than a rhetorical device that both combatants knew well. Valentinian rejected Symmachus' petition, heeding Ambrose's exhortations to be a 'Christian monarch', as Gratian had done before him.

Theodosius, the Catholic Church and the Cunctos populos decree of 380 CE

Theodosius was a devout Catholic Christian who had no doubt as to the merits of his faith. Almost as soon as he had taken power, he nailed his colours to the mast (Liebeschuetz 1990: 157; Williams and Friell 1994: 53). In February 380, he issued an edict known by its first two words as '*Cunctos populos*' ('All peoples'; *Theodosian Code* 16.1.2). This law mandated Catholic Christianity (as defined by the Bishop of Rome) as the one true faith. The law ordered all Christians to hold to this orthodoxy, abandoning all other Christian groups which were adjudged mad and incoherent and forbidden to call themselves 'churches'.

This drastic intervention was not without risk. Arianism was far stronger than Nicene orthodoxy in the east. Theodosius had prepared carefully (Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 7.4; Liebeschuetz 1990: 158), and was satisfied that his opposition was sufficiently divided to be ineffectual. Nevertheless, the edict was not received well in Constantinople; there was rioting, and Theodosius was compelled to enter the city and expel the Arian clergy (Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 7.5–7). The installation of the fiercely Nicene Gregory Nazianzus as Patriarch of Constantinople could only be enforced through the deployment of soldiers.

Theodosius then tried a new strategy. On 10 January 381 he issued a law which named the heresies to be outlawed: the Photinians, the Arians and the Eunomians (*Theodosian Code* 16.5.6). Those who adhered to these assemblies were to be denied the name and privileges of Church; persistent offenders were to be driven from towns where their views had been made manifest. Theodosius was, inexorably, moving to a position where Catholic, or Nicene, Christianity, was enshrined in law and alternative doctrinal systems were banned.

Theodosius also saw the merits in reasserting the theology of Nicaea. A new ecumenical council was called to meet in Constantinople in May 381. This Council marked the formal victory of Trinitarianism over Arianism. An amended version of the Nicene Creed was adopted – the one substantially still in

use today. The critical importance of the Council of Constantinople was that it enabled orthodoxy (as it became) to refine itself since, henceforth, the Creed which it produced became the touchstone of all that was doctrinally proper.

The Council marked the acceleration of the legislative campaign against heresy. Measures became harsher as the year progressed. In July, heretics (and Arians were here again named) were forbidden to build meeting-houses (*Theodosian Code* 16.5.8). Less than two weeks later, Theodosius ordered the expulsion of all non-catholic clergy and bishops, and their replacement by orthodox churchmen (*Theodosian Code* 16.1.3). This law defined orthodoxy as the doctrines held by the Bishops of Constantinople, Alexandria, Laodicea, Tarsus, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch, Cappadocian Caesarea, Melitene, Nyssa, Scythia and Marcianopolis – all eastern sees. Theodosius had no intention of allowing the definition of orthodoxy to slip through his fingers.

Theodosius' proscription of Arianism had the desired effect. Deprived of the sustenance of its communities, and the ability of its leaders to organize, it withered. Theodosius saw no virtue in pluralism, had taken the initiative and imposed his views.

Theodosius and Ambrose

In 387, Magnus Maximus sought to extend his authority by driving Valentinian II out of Italy. The young emperor fled with his mother to Theodosius, who invaded the Roman west in the following year. It was a difficult war, but ultimately Theodosius captured and executed Maximus. That brought Theodosius to Milan by 10 October 388, where he made the acquaintance of Ambrose, whose views on empire and imperial authority were very similar to his own. Yet the two came into conflict very swiftly, as set out in detail in Chapter 57 of this volume.

Some Christians, with the encouragement of their bishop, had burned down a synagogue in the Mesopotamian town of Callinicum. Destruction of pagan monuments by the authorities was one thing: vigilantism, another. Theodosius' response was to order the rebuilding of the synagogue at the bishop's expense, a decision he later amended to make the entire congregation liable (Ambrose, *Epistles* 40, 41).

Ambrose protested the ruling, but to little effect. He therefore made his displeasure public in a sermon in which he compared Theodosius to King David and himself to the prophet Nathan (Ambrose, *Epistle* 41). The implication was plain. Ambrose claimed the right of moral guardianship of the emperor. He then refused to celebrate Mass until the emperor had reversed his policy. Theodosius accepted Ambrose's terms, and, by implication, his right to dictate them.

In the following year, another confrontation occurred over a far bloodier provocation (see Chapter 57 of this volume for further details). The assassination of a garrison commander in Thessalonica had been followed by a massacre of citizenry in retaliation (Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 7.25). On hearing the news, Ambrose had been stunned and sickened (Ambrose, *Epistle* 51). Usually aloof from court politics, Ambrose could not refrain from protest (Matthews 1975: 235). He wrote to Theodosius, stating that he would be unavailable to celebrate Mass if the emperor were in the congregation. This was not a formal excommunication, but it had the same result. Theodosius did public penance and satisfied Ambrose of his contrition. The emperor could not ignore Ambrose. Theodosius was a prisoner of his own orthodoxy, bound to heed episcopal authority. Ambrose, for his part, was not so much seeking power for its own sake as exercising the same theology of power as he had under Gratian and Valentinian II (Rousseau 1996).

Theodosius and paganism

Theodosius' approach to paganism was generally inclusive. Although he continued to oppose sacrifice (*Theodosian Code* 16.10.7), he extended a measure of generosity to traditional believers (Williams and Friell 1994: 57). In 384, Themistius was appointed Urban Prefect of Constantinople, entrusted with

the care of Theodosius' young son Arcadius during Theodosius' absence (Jones *et al.* 1971: 892). Later, when Theodosius went to the west to deal with Magnus Maximus, he left two pagans, Tatianus and Proculus, in senior offices of responsibility (Matthews 1975: 224; Williams and Friell 1994: 62). This policy does not so much reflect a preference for pagans, but a general recognition that paganism was not a disqualification for imperial office. Like eunuchs, and like the court Jews of a later period, they could perform valuable and sensitive service for their masters without the apprehension of higher ambition. A famous relief from an obelisk in Constantinople shows Theodosius surrounded by his courtiers and soldiers (see Figure 10.7). In Rome itself, when he visited the city in 389, he honoured many of the pagan luminaries of the Senate who had made the mistake of supporting Magnus Maximus (Matthews 1975: 227–231).

Theodosius' court pagans, and the pagan senatorial aristocracy, were in a precarious position, however. Their security depended upon the emperor's pleasure, and that seems to have evaporated soon after the Thessalonica incident. In February 391, Theodosius issued a law formally banning all pagan practice, and prescribing monetary penalties for those of the administrative class and above (*Theodosian Code* 16.10.10). His new approach to paganism was marked by anti-pagan riots. In one of these, at Alexandria, the Serapaeum, one of the grandest and most venerable shrines of late antique paganism, and the home of a magnificent library, was destroyed by a Christian mob (Eunapius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 472).

In the face of this outright condemnation and intolerance, aristocratic pagans must have felt impotent. The only alternative to Theodosius was the young emperor Valentinian II, who was completely dominated by Arbogast, his Master of the Soldiers and a pagan (Jones *et al.* 1971: 96). In 392, Valentinian sought to assert himself and dismiss Arbogast from his post. Arbogast ignored the order (Zosimus, *New History* 4.53). Soon afterwards, Valentinian was discovered dead in his room, a victim more probably of his own hand than of murder (Matthews 1975: 239). Arbogast was nevertheless blamed by Theodosius, and so he responded by nominating a new emperor in the west, Flavius Eugenius.

Figure 10.7 Theodosius with his courtiers and soldiers, from an obelisk in Constantinople. Photo Bill Leadbetter

A rhetorician and a bureaucrat, his lack of military credentials made him the sort of candidate whom Arbogast could safely dominate (Jones *et al*. 1971: 293). Eugenius himself was a Christian, but of liberal and intellectual cast (Bloch 1963: 199). Theodosius' refusal to negotiate made conflict inevitable. Pagan aristocrats now saw the chance to assert themselves. An alliance was formed with Eugenius, who promptly restored funding to temples, although from his private resources rather than the public purse (Matthews 1975: 240). Oracles promised the victory of paganism over Christianity (Chadwick 1984). Nicomachus Flavianus, an eminent pagan who had held high office under Theodosius, was appointed Praetorian Prefect; his son became City Prefect of Rome. The gods were celebrated in public festivals in the city; temples were rebuilt (Matthews 1970: 478–479); games were celebrated (Matthews 1975: 243f.). Nicomachus Flavianus swept off to war, threatening Ambrose that, upon his return, Milan's basilica would be renovated as a stable (Paulinus of Nola, *Life of Ambrose* 31).

The confrontation occurred at the Battle of the Frigidus in July 394. Eugenius' army was defeated and Eugenius himself captured and executed. Both Nicomachus Flavianus and Arbogast committed suicide. Victory over Eugenius was also a victory over the pagan aristocracy. Although more forgiveness than savagery followed Theodosius' victory, they now knew that they existed at his mercy. The alliance with Eugenius had proven a costly folly, but, given Theodosius' attitude to paganism, they had little choice if they wished to retain their integrity.

Conclusion

The Battle of the Frigidus does not mark the final victory of Christianity over paganism. In 408, when the troops of Alaric were besieging Rome, the traditional cults were briefly restored (Zosimus, *New History* 5.41). Pagans continued to worship, quietly and clandestinely. Pagan intellectuals, like Zosimus, continued to mourn the victory of Christianity in their work. But it was a victory that could not be reversed. It is not merely that Constantine had so deeply ingrained Christianity. He had not. The change was already occurring under the surface of the Roman world of élites. Language and lifeways were slowly changing into the form which Christian culture took. By the time Theodosius came to declare Christianity the religion of the empire, such a pronouncement was neither a surprise nor a challenge to most people. Those who clung to their ancestral beliefs did so tenaciously, but all the more so in defiance of the inexorable tide of Christianity. It may not have been the Christianity of the Apostles, but it was the Roman Christianity that brought forth Christendom and provided the intellectual foundation for the European Middle Ages.

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11

JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN INTERACTION FROM THE FIRST TO THE FIFTH CENTURIES

Anders Runesson

Studying Jewish and Christian interaction: problems and procedure

Issues relating to the nature and extent of Jewish and Christian interaction in antiquity are as complex as the available evidence is problematic and difficult to interpret. Indeed, the very terms 'Jewish' and 'Christian' themselves are awkward on several levels, all of which threaten to undermine the project of historical reconstruction. Given that any use of terminology takes as point of departure how the words employed are understood in contemporary discourses, just as much as our historical questions necessarily proceed from the here and now, approaching the problem of Jewish and Christian interaction in antiquity necessarily begins with reflection on what is assumed by the question. In which ways does the question control the way we seek and find our answers? I shall offer here just a few observations before we proceed to discuss the issues at hand.

First, in conventional discourses today, 'Christianity' and 'Judaism' are commonly listed together with other phenomena, such as, e.g. 'Hinduism' and 'Buddhism', all of which are treated as if they were examples of several 'species' belonging to the genus 'religion'. This way of construing 'religion' as an overarching classification within which these traditions are organised has, however, been critiqued as an expression of a modern Western (ethnocentric) worldview; the category 'religion' may fit some socio-cultural and religio-political contexts, while being quite foreign to others (cf. Josephson 2012). For the historian of what is today called 'Judaism' and 'Christianity', this problem of categorisation also reaches back in time, diachronically, potentially forging anachronistic assumptions about the past based on our understanding of our (local) present.[1] If 'religion' as we commonly use the term today did not exist until late antiquity, as Daniel Boyarin and others have argued,[2] or even later (Nongbri 2013), that means that the very question about interaction between what we would understand as religious groups, Judaism and Christianity, needs to be reconfigured to accommodate the period antedating the 'religionising' of these traditions.[3] This is true even if we choose to still use the term 'religion'; we see certain developments between the first and fifth centuries in this regard, which need to be taken into consideration when interaction is analysed.

At the heart of this complex of problems lies the issue of ethnicity, as intertwined with a geographical area (land), certain god(s), and specific, culturally embedded laws and customs (Mason 2007: 457–512). If Judaism does not refer to a system of beliefs and practices abstracted from ethnic and cultural customs, but designates a way of life expressed in various spheres of society (domestic as well as public and the social space in-between, where we find the associations), we need to analyse any interaction between people belonging to this group and other

similar groups taking into consideration ethnic identity as well as the nature of the interaction, as it takes place in various social loci where aspects of ethnicity are expressed.[4]

This brings us to a second problem, namely that 'Christianity' as a 'religion' comes into being sometime during the period targeted in this chapter. Originally, the movement that formed around Jesus, both before and after his death, was, as much as any other Jewish movements, such as the Pharisees or the Essenes, an integral part of what we call 'Judaism'. Indeed, the term 'Christianity' was used for the first time only in the second century.[5] Strictly speaking, then, it is not possible to study 'Jewish' and 'Christian' interaction in the early period, without distorting the evidence through aligning it terminologically, socio-religiously and politically with later historical periods. In brief, and in very generalised terms, what we see during the first five centuries is a gradual process, often ambiguous and never linear, in which the Jesus movement becomes ethno-culturally disembedded, losing central identity markers related to the Jewish ethnos, markers which emerging mainstream forms of Late-Antique Judaism maintained, nurtured and developed. Understanding of this process, which materialised in distinctive ways in different social, political and geographical loci, is of key interest to anyone engaged in studying interaction between members of the Jesus movement(s) and other Jews and non-Jews.

During the course of these developments, Christianity as we know it today as a tradition related to but separate from Judaism took form as a 'religion'. The creation of 'religion' as a system of beliefs and practices disentangled from aspects of ethnicity was thus contemporaneous with the emergence of Christianity (and, somewhat later, Islam).[6] Non-Jewish Christians forged this new type of 'religious' identity, but due to the Jewish ethno-religious roots clearly manifested in their holy scriptures, and the fact that many Christians seemed not to have been aware of any significant differences between Judaism and Christianity,[7] the entire project needed 'Judaism' as a negative comparative counterpart, a reversed 'religious' mirror image against which 'Christianity' would make religious sense as the only salvifically viable option. Christian supersessionism, i.e. the notion that Christianity and Judaism are mutually exclusive and that Christians have superseded Jews as the people of God, requires precisely two clearly identifiable and comparable religious categories to make theo-rhetorical sense. While Jews never internalised this image of their way of life as a 'religion' – most mainstream forms of Judaism still maintain the key connection between ethnos, land, law and God – Christian discourses on Judaism, even in our own days, often construe Judaism assuming a universal relevance of the basic parameters of religious boundary making that apply within Christian communities. What we have here, then, and what makes the task of analysing interaction in this specific case complicated, is an asymmetric historical relationship (an apples-and-oranges scenario, if you like) often terminologically concealed in the literature, but which is stretched out over centuries.

Even in cases of symmetrical relationships, however, it would be a mistake to understand interaction between individuals and groups, identified based on religious criteria, as motivated exclusively by religious concerns and identities. Identity is a complex phenomenon; actions rarely spring from concerns isolated to one aspect of human existence. What may seem to be religiously motivated interaction may, in reality, be better explained by other factors and interests. Further, one should also note that interaction may take different forms in different spheres of society, and that distinct types of source material will yield information about and help interpret contextually the evidence related to each. The major parameters to take into account when interaction is to be analysed may be summarised in a chart, on the basis that for primary sources, each source type (e.g. legal material, inscriptions, papyri, literary texts, archaeological remains) should be examined based on what type of information can be extracted from it as related to the three social levels (Figure 11.1).

Finally, it is of some importance to keep in mind the larger Graeco-Roman socio-political (and therefore also cultic) context in which interaction took place between groups and individuals adhering to some sort of worship involving the Jesus figure, whether Jews or non-Jews, on the one hand, and Jews who chose not to follow this messiah, on the other. This overarching public imperial matrix, in which our interaction was embedded and moulded, gradually changed over the centuries,

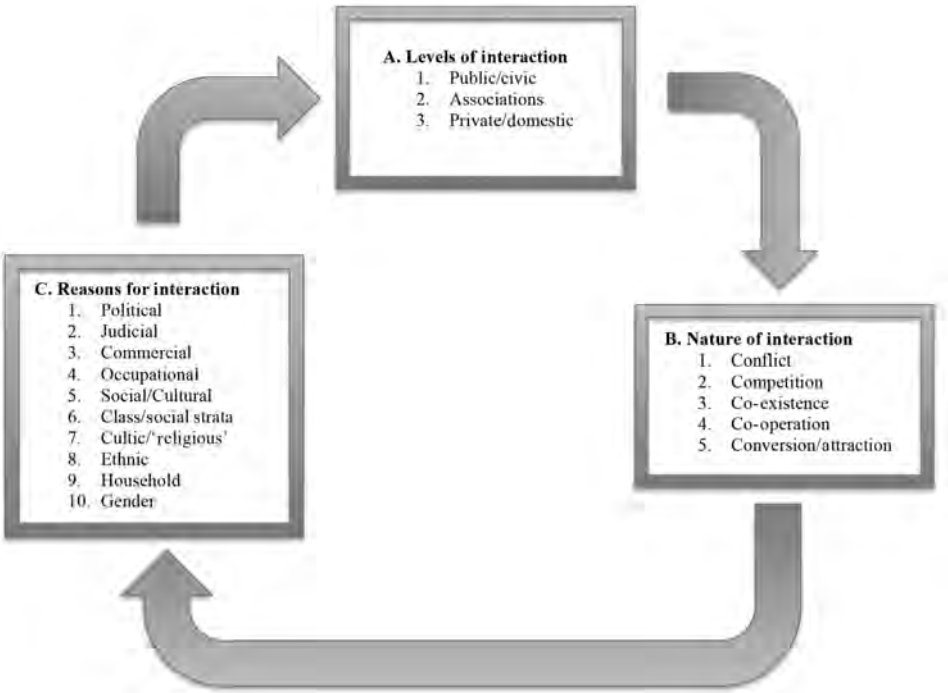

Figure 11.1 Examples of parameters to take into account in analysis of Jewish/Christian interaction. Copyright Anders Runesson

so that during the timespan we are interested in here, one form of (Nicaean) Christ-cult rose to political prominence as all Graeco-Roman cults were officially prohibited in 392 by Theodosius I. This, of course, did not mean that such worship of these gods disappeared; on the contrary, there is plenty of evidence that this process took several centuries to be implemented.[8] It does mean, however, that certain state/civic dynamics changed, eventually leading to transformed relationships between Jewish and Christian groups. The overall general development may be described in a simple chart (Figure 11.2):

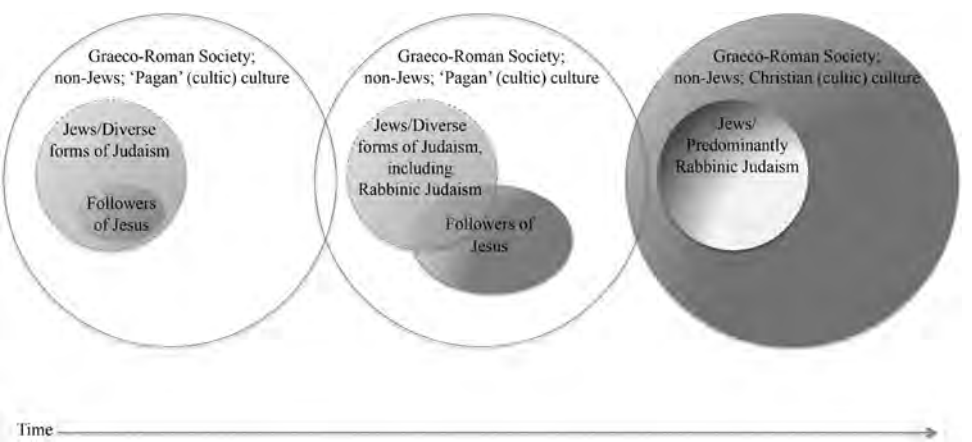

Figure 11.2 The transformation of the imperial socio-political and cultic context in which interaction between Christ-groups, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, and other Jews took place, from the first to the seventh centuries CE. Copyright Anders Runesson

At the same time as this form of politically empowered (non-Jewish) Christianity rose to prominence, we see in Jewish communities the rise of a particular form of Judaism, rabbinic Judaism, gradually defining for most Jews what it meant to be 'Jewish'. Again, this does not mean that other forms of Judaism had long since disappeared. Rather, in the struggle to (re-)define Judaism in a Late-Antique world where non-Jewish forms of Christianity claimed both Jewish holy scriptures and public political space, rabbinic Jews reacted against alternative forms of expressing Jewishness, including Jesus-centred forms of Judaism, as they narrowed down what they understood to be appropriate modes of being Jewish.[9]

With these reflections in mind, we shall now proceed chronologically as we consider aspects of interaction (conflict, competition, co-existence, co-operation and attraction/conversion, in various combinations) within the general context described above. The chronological sequence will, however, be subordinated to a social criterion, so that developments are approached looking at different spheres of society in turn, beginning with public civic settings before moving on to associations and domestic contexts, respectively.

While literary texts will provide us with most of the source material, we shall also comment on other source types (e.g. archaeological remains). Doing so, we will pay special attention to institutional settings within which attitudes towards the other may have been shaped and enacted. Before concluding, we shall comment on the process often, and in my opinion problematically, called the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity. Throughout, the deceptively simple questions, 'Who is a Jew?' 'Who is a Christian?' and, importantly, 'Who decides?' will threaten to undermine, implicitly or explicitly, any overly neat categorisations, frustrating our desire for unambiguous answers.

Interaction in public civic settings: local, national, imperial

The historical Jesus and the group of people that formed around him were active and proclaimed their message in the public, (religio-)civic institutions of the land of Israel that our sources use various terms to describe (e.g. *synagōgē*, *proseuchē*, *ekklēsia*), but which in modern English are called synagogues (Runesson 2014: 265–297).[10]

The earliest evidence speaking of interaction between followers of Jesus (as well as Jesus himself) and other Jews in this type of public setting is found in the New Testament Gospels: Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. While based on interpreted oral traditions predating the fall of the temple in 70 CE, these texts were authored in the late first century and, at points, signal concerns relevant to that time. There is no evidence, though, of any institutional or structural changes in local public synagogues/civic assemblies during the first and early second centuries, a historical circumstance making our task somewhat easier with regard to the issue of possible anachronisms in the texts. The political developments that eventually led to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, the key (religio-)civic institution in the earliest period, did affect, however, how the Jesus movement was perceived and treated by various leadership groups in Jewish society, both on what we may call a national level and in some local settings.[11] From the pen of a Jewish author outside of the Jesus movement commenting on our topic from a first-century perspective, we have only two brief passages, of which one has been edited by a later Christian scribe: Josephus' *Antiquities* (18:63–64; 20.200). What can we say about interaction between the Jesus movement and Jewish and other authorities in the land based on this evidence?

First, we need to distinguish between interaction in local synagogues in various parts of the land, on the one hand, and the institution of the temple, on the other; the latter was, in contrast to the local character of the former, the focal point for discourses on Jewish national identity. The temple authorities had, moreover, until 70 CE, cultic, and therefore also political, responsibility for the otherwise administratively separate parts of the land, governed, respectively, by Rome directly and, with some interruption, Herodian rulers until around 100 CE when all areas were brought under Roman provincial rule.

Figure 11.3 The synagogue at Gamla on the Golan Heights, just northeast of Lake Tiberias; looking southwest. The building is dated to the first century BCE. Note the architectural design, especially the stepped benches, and what it implies about the nature of the public meetings and interaction that took place in this type of space. Photo copyright Anders Runesson

The evidence strongly suggests that the historical Jesus chose to interact with local Jewish communities primarily through their public institutions, the synagogues and that, doing so, he attracted negative attention from the local leaders in charge (Ryan 2016). The reasons for conflicts between Jesus and these local scribal leaders were likely complex, and are not easily generalised. As Chris Keith has argued, it is probable that the mere fact that Jesus took on a role in these institutions otherwise held by the scribes probably triggered, in and of itself, significant discontent, regardless of the message proclaimed (Keith 2014). One cannot ignore, however, that as local administrators in charge of, among other things, interpreting and teaching law based on local custom and tradition,[12] these scribes would have been sensitive to the political dimensions of a message focused on bringing about a kingdom, which precluded current figures of authority from retaining their positions of power. While there are plenty of traditions speaking of Jewish crowds supporting and following Jesus, and we have some evidence of members of another Jewish group, the Pharisees, trying to save Jesus' life when he is threatened by the ruler of Galilee (Luke 13:31[13]), we have no positive remarks preserved directed at Jewish political rulers. Herod the Great is accused of trying to kill Jesus (Matt. 2:13–17); Archelaos is a threat to Jesus' life (Matt. 2:22); Antipas executes Jesus' closest ally John (Matt. 14:1–12; cf. Luke 3:19), seeks to kill Jesus and is called a fox (Luke 13:31–32). Further, Jesus is revealed as the Messiah, the coming king, in Philip's territory, directly after which both Mark and Matthew have placed a section where Jesus discloses that he will be rejected by politically influential leaders and then killed (Mark 8:27–31; Matt. 16:16–21; cf. Luke 9:20–22).

Such traditions indicate to us memories of a Jesus who stirred political unrest. Since his message was often proclaimed publicly in civic institutions (synagogues), the leaders in charge of those institutions were faced with the choice of rejecting or supporting the religio-political critique of power

inherent in the message. While Matthew's gospel does indicate that some local scribes in fact joined his movement (Matt. 13:52; 23:34; cf. 8:19), it seems improbable that many did, since such movements were likely seen as destabilising an already delicate situation under Roman imperial influence. As for the region where Jesus was primarily active, Galilee, we also know that Antipas was a comparatively effective ruler, as far as the balancing act between Rome's demands (taxation) and popular unrest was concerned.[14] This would hardly have been possible without some sort of co-operation, or at least not open hostility, between local and regional authorities.[15]

This general picture of tension between Jesus and his followers, on the one hand, and local and regional civic authorities, on the other, is reinforced and intensified when the scene shifts to the national level, i.e. when Jesus and his followers interact with various authorities in Jerusalem. There is a general tendency in all the gospels, although more so in the Synoptics than in John, to describe Jesus and his movement as successful among the people ('the crowds') both in Galilee and Jerusalem, so that the majority of the Jewish people is portrayed in sharp contrast to the civic authorities.[16] While the texts include a few critical comments related to the 'crowds' (and Jesus' own disciples), and Matthew's gospel in particular is fiercely critical towards the Pharisees and vice versa, it seems clear that the historical Jesus and the earliest movement around him targeted specifically the civic authorities,[17] both in Galilee and the surrounding areas and in Jerusalem.

Since in the ancient world human societies were understood as intertwined with and mirroring the cosmic realm, a 'religious' message about a coming kingdom, especially when paired with claims that current leaders were illegitimate, would inevitably be seen as inciting revolt, as a threat to the status quo. Civic leaders would react accordingly, especially in Jerusalem where awareness of the sensitive situation caused by Rome's imperial presence was acute. From the perspective of these leaders, they themselves were, of course, legitimate authorities. Serving the God of Israel, they had been charged with the difficult duty of performing cultic and political tasks balancing between the threat of Roman intervention and popular riots and insurrection (cf. John 11:48–50; Acts 5:27–28). From the perspective of Jesus and the people who joined him, the current conditions in the land – divided as it was into separate administrative units, ruled not by a Jewish king of the Davidic line but by Herodians and, even worse in the case of Judea and Samaria, by Rome directly – was evidence that God's anger had been provoked and judgement was about to be executed.

It would seem from a political and military perspective that the Jewish authorities had little choice but to let the Romans handle the situation in the manner they always did with similar movements, through executing leaders and most of the followers,[18] and so save the people from destruction, as John's gospel would also describe it (John 11:50). As we shall see below, it is likely that the Jesus movement continued to spread among Jews in the land long after the execution of Jesus, which in turn would explain the continued resistance against this group among many local leaders of civic institutions (synagogues), as noted by the gospels (Mark 13:9; Matt. 10:17–18; 23:34; Luke 21:12). Josephus also reports that, in Jerusalem, the high priest Ananus, using the Sanhedrin as a legal tool, saw to it that James the brother of Jesus and some others, presumably also members of the movement, were executed (Josephus, *AJ* 20:200).

If we summarise the interaction between members of the Jesus-group and Jewish civic authorities in the early period (first century), we may note the following. In terms of the nature of the interaction, the sources mention almost exclusively tension and conflict, which often led to punishment, presumably based on court proceedings. It is likely, however, that only such persons in the movement who were very vocal and were perceived as direct threats to social and political stability were targeted in such procedures; the majority of sympathisers would not have experienced this type of violence. We have no evidence of mass persecutions of followers of Jesus resulting in executions by Jewish authorities, but must assume a certain level of co-existence between members of this group and others in Jewish villages, towns and cities, especially in areas removed from political centres such as Jerusalem.[19]

Why, then, did Jesus and the movement that followed him trigger this type of reaction with civic authorities? As noted above, while the basic reasons for these negative developments were very likely

related to social dynamics involved when role expectations associated with class were disrupted, perhaps especially in Galilee, it is impossible to ignore the political implications of the proclamation of a coming kingdom and how that would have been perceived by civic leaders as threatening to destabilise the status quo. This latter reason for the conflict provoked by the Jesus-group would have been especially acute on the national level in Jerusalem, as Roman imperial interests would have made themselves known precisely in relation to such a religio-political ideology (cf. John 11:48–50). As we see from passages in the gospels and in Josephus, the reaction of the Jewish authorities involved was to activate judicial proceedings and refer to law in order to remove what they saw as a threat to continued relatively peaceful interaction with Roman imperial interests, which in turn was in all likelihood understood as a measure taken to save the Jewish people from destruction. For those members of the Jesus movement who were most vocal and attracted the attention of the authorities, the result could be some sort of corporeal punishment, such as flogging, a punishment meted out in synagogues according to the Mishnah,[20] and, on rare occasions, death. It may be of some interest to note that these types of conflicts have nothing to do with ethnicity, which later becomes an issue in other settings, neither with what we would call religious teachings, understood as divorced from political concerns, and as such would also be a site for negative interaction in later centuries.

When we move into the second century, our sources on interaction involving civic authorities and legislation become meagre, only to re-emerge in the fourth to sixth centuries with Christian legislation on Jews and Judaism in an empire where leading political authorities now embraced (non-Jewish) Christianity as state religion.[21] While historically, as we know from Josephus,[22] the Jews were accepted and enjoyed protection from civic authorities in Mediterranean societies in the early centuries, things began to change slowly once Christianity had become politically empowered in the late fourth and fifth centuries. As Amnon Linder (1987: 87) writes:

> State intervention in typically 'religious' Jewish matters resulted, therefore, from the general tendency of the state to penetrate areas of life in which it had not previously been involved and from the growing hostility toward Judaism and its institutions which intensified in direct proportion to the Christianization of the state.

While in the first century conflicts between Christ-followers and other Jews could be brought to a non-Jewish court, only to be referred back to the Jewish community as a matter to be dealt with by the Jews themselves, later non-Jewish Christian imperial legislators produced laws aiming to circumscribe more generally Jewish interaction with others, especially Christians, in society, and Christians could not be judged by a court led by a Jew.[23]

To be sure, Christian imperial legislation on Jews and Judaism also contained positive aspects, a witness to the fact that legislators, understanding Judaism as a 'religion' and categorising it as such alongside Christianity, saw a close affinity between Judaism and Christianity, as opposed to 'pagan' traditions.[24] Importantly, Judaism was recognised as a 'permitted religion', protected as such in a law dated to 393 CE,[25] a legal tradition Christian legislators inherited from their 'pagan' predecessors. As in earlier periods, in a law from 412 CE, Jews were exempted from performing duties on sabbaths and holidays.[26] Further, a law from 398 CE rules that Jews and their synagogues must be protected from Christian attacks.[27]

With regard to synagogues, the centres of Jewish communal life, we see a declining pattern, however. As a *locus religionis* ('place of religion'), the synagogue enjoyed protection in several laws from the fourth century not only from attacks by Christians but also when local rulers prevented these buildings from being used. While this approach is distinguishable until as late as the early fifth century, more restrictive legislation began to emerge in 415 CE. At that time, Theodosius II, targeting Gamaliel VI, banned the building of new synagogues and ordered those in unpopulated areas to be destroyed; in 423 CE this was turned into general law.[28] With one atypical exception,[29] already existing synagogues were allowed to stand and, when needed, renovated. Other laws that restricted

Jewish life in Christian society related to ownership and conversion of Christian slaves, intermarriage (law promulgated in 388 CE), the autonomy of Jewish legal systems, the level of involvement of Jews in administration (Jews were prohibited from entering into 'state service' in 418 CE[30]), and the extent to which Jewish lawyers could practise law.

Several of these laws, such as those relating to synagogues and intermarriage, were clearly meant to prevent Judaism from expanding. This, in turn, indicates that the opposite was in fact happening at this time; it is a reasonable assumption that legislation aims at preventing from happening phenomena and behaviour that actually occur. We cannot, then, draw far-reaching conclusions about the general state of Jewish communities and Jewish–Christian relations based on a simplistic reading of legal sources only. After all, we know from archaeological remains that monumental synagogues were still being built at this time, and that there were a number of contemporary laws aimed at protecting Christianity from defamation and Christian rites from being profaned by Jews. Laws from 408 and 409 CE protect orthodox Christians from persecution by various 'heretics', Jews and pagans in North Africa, for example.[31] It appears, thus, that the Jews were not an entirely marginalised and fragile minority even as late as in the fifth century.[32] Rather, we find in Jewish communities vocal groups which received proselytes and, at least in some places, even worked to expand their membership.[33] It is also during this time, from the fourth century onwards, that we see rabbinic Judaism emerge as mainstream Judaism, both in the land and in the Diaspora. This does not mean that other forms of Judaism, including Jesus-centred Judaism, immediately disappeared. As recent research has found, these other forms of Judaism likely contributed to shaping rabbinic Judaism as the latter sought to clarify the boundaries of its communities. We shall return to this later in the chapter. Here we can note only that the success of the rabbis as they sought to promulgate a definition of Judaism that aligned with their own program may have attracted the attention of non-Jews as well, which would contribute to explaining laws issued against conversion and circumcision of non-Jews.

For a variety of different reasons, sources on interaction between followers of Jesus, whether Jews or non-Jews, and other Jews in the public, civic sphere of society, including judicial settings, speak mostly of conflict and partly of various levels of co-existence. It is of some interest to note that Christian legislation relating to Jews and Judaism understands Judaism as a 'religion', which means that the ethnic aspect, which is otherwise clearly visible in other sources as a matter of contention, is largely neutralised. This has both positive and negative effects. Among the former we find Jewish communities awarded privileges corresponding to those of Christian communities; among the latter, Jews may be, on occasion, placed together with others in the category 'heretics'. In any case, it is the restrictive legislation that eventually wins the day and prepares the way for the marginalised status of the Jewish people in medieval Europe. While this is an important conclusion in and of itself, we should not mistake these sources for the 'reality on the ground' in the period we are concerned with here. Even in restrictive and marginalising legislation one can detect under the surface significant interaction between groups and individuals in private and semi-public contexts, including not only co-existence but also co-operation and attraction/conversion. We turn now to these other social settings.

Interaction in and between associations and association-like institutions

The above discussion concerned the interpretation of sources revealing attitudes and interaction as they pertain to the elite, i.e. a small but powerful minority of any ancient society. Often, while judicial institutions were empowered to implement ideologies embedded in law on the ground, the attitudes, practices and habits of the vast majority of the population rarely aligned in any symmetrical way with those of the ruling classes. In order to reconstruct how people ordinarily related to one another, we need, consequently, to look beyond the elites. This leads us to not only consider evidence relating to individuals and the domestic sphere, but also to take into account sources that can tell us something about the social space in-between the private and the public, i.e. that space where

we find what we may call voluntary associations.[34] These organisations provided contexts in which smaller groups of people could relate to one another in ways that benefitted them in their various roles in society in different stages of life – and death. Interaction between individuals within such settings could take forms that were not possible to enact in other spheres of society, for example with regard to the gender and social status of the members. While some associations were for men only, and others restricted access to women, many associations were mixed, containing members of both genders. As members, slaves and free interacted, too, in ways that were not possible in either public or domestic settings.

Categorising associations according to the networks they supported is a helpful strategy in terms of identifying their relevance for and effect on people's lives. Philip Harland has suggested a five-fold such division of these groups, differentiating between those with connections to household, ethnic or geographical location, neighbourhood, occupation and cult, respectively (Harland 2003: 28–52). There exists some overlap between these, and one should note, e.g. that while some associations were devoted exclusively to the cult of a certain deity, all associations included rituals expressing respect for and expecting benefits from the gods. Further, membership was not exclusive, so that a person could be a member of more than one association.

Jewish institutions, both in the Diaspora and in the land, building primarily on ethnic, and therefore also cultic connections, were designated by the same type of terms as we have seen above with regard to the public civic institutions in the land. Of these, *synagōgē* and *proseuchē* were the most common, but *ekklēsia* could also be used, especially, but not uniquely, by those Jews

Figure 11.4 The synagogue at Ostia, Rome's harbour; looking west north-west. The building was used, approximately, over the entire period covered in this chapter and so yields important evidence with regard to developments in art and architecture at this time. Synagogues in the Diaspora were understood as various forms of Jewish associations, all of which served a number of functions for their members, including providing a setting for the worship of the God of Israel. Photo copyright Anders Runesson

and non-Jews who were members of Christ-groups. While in later centuries, *ekklēsia* came to be used exclusively by (non-Jewish) Christians as designating their religious institutions, and *synagōgē* became synonymous with a Jewish institution, we cannot in the early period make distinctions between 'synagogue' and 'church', or 'Jews' and 'Christians', based on the institutional terminology applied by these groups.[35]

The importance of the associations for our task can hardly be overestimated, since they provide us with a setting in which followers of Jesus, whether Jewish or not, and other Jews, for various reasons, gathered and interacted with one another.[36] As participants in ancient Mediterranean socio-institutional cultures, Christ-believers and other Jews would likely have had to be involved in various types of associations, in addition to those devoted exclusively to the cult of their deity, the God of Israel. For example, those involved in trades and industries would presumably associate with others in guilds supporting relevant networks. Thus, we cannot assume, in a manner somewhat analogical to modern day synagogues and churches, that all institutional settings in which we find Christ-believers and/or other Jews were devoted uniquely to various forms of worship of the God of Israel. Rather, the picture is complex and mixed, and it makes sociological sense to assume some frequency of positive interaction (not only co-existence but also co-operation) between Jews and Christ-believers in such settings, for purposes partly unrelated to their cultic identity and related beliefs.[37] For a movement with some level of missionary intent and habits, such as the Christ-believers, this type of shared space provided a platform for interaction with 'outsiders' aiming at attracting them to join their (sub-)group. This kind of setting may thus help explain the 'how' of the expansion of the Christ-movement both within and beyond the Jewish ethnos, depending on the membership profile of the relevant associations.

Neighbourhood associations provide another intriguing social space where we must assume that, in certain locations, interaction between believers in Jesus and other Jews and non-Jews took place. One example may suffice to show the reasonableness of such an assumption. Based on research on the nature of the group of Christ-believers in Corinth in light of other associations, Richard Last has recently proposed that Paul's use of *idiōtēs* in 1 Corinthians, a term designating a member of an association in other association contexts, may lead to the conclusion that there were members in the association into which Paul spoke who were not Christ-believers (cf. *apistos*,[38] 1 Cor 14:23, 24).[39] If one assumes the institutional setting to be a neighbourhood association, and understands the group to which the letter is addressed as constituting about ten or so members, as Last does (Last 2016b: 20), this means that Paul is writing to a group of Christ-followers existing within a somewhat larger association with which it shares meeting space. Indeed, the argument of 1 Cor 14:15–25 depends on the assumption not only of such shared space between those 'loyal' to the Christ and those 'disloyal', but even the presence of the 'disloyal' in gatherings where Paul's addressees give expression to their loyalty to Christ, i.e. in cultic settings.

Now, while the suggestion of a neighbourhood association setting for the Corinthian *ekklēsia* seems to me to be an attractive and socio-institutionally plausible hypothesis, solving as it does some of the difficulties in the text, we may go one step further and ask about the neighbourhood itself; more specifically about who the other members might have been, those who were not Christ-followers. Of course, we enter here to some degree the realm of speculation, but there are some arguments in favour of attempting to identify this group.

One possibility would be to assume these other members to be non-Jews, living in the same neighbourhood. Another solution may be to understand this to be a Jewish neighbourhood, and thus envisage a scenario in which some of the other members of the association are Jewish. There are several reasons why, in my opinion, the latter suggestion should be preferred.

First, as is the case in most societies today receiving immigrant populations, people from the same national or ethnic background tend, generally, to live in proximity to one another. The same pattern is found in relation to some Jewish Diaspora communities in antiquity, with explicit evidence from Alexandria and Rome.[40]

Second, we know from other sources that non-Jews attended Jewish assemblies and worshipped the God of Israel, before and apart from the arrival of the Jesus movement,[41] and we know that non-Jewish Christ-followers continued this type of practice for centuries (Fredriksen 2016: 30).[42] The boundaries between Jewish communities and 'others' were, socio-institutionally, porous. Having individuals or groups of Christ-followers, non-Jewish and/or Jewish, in Jewish neighbourhood associations, or other types of Jewish associations dedicated to the cult of the God of Israel, would, understood from the perspective of ancient Mediterranean societies, not be strange or unusual at all.

Third, as Rodney Stark has shown, it makes sociological sense to assume that Christ-groups spread first and foremost among Jews (Stark 1997).[43] Fourth, another ancient text, Acts, often points to specifically ethnic connections among players prominent in the spread of the movement, even in Corinth itself where we also find an occupational connection mentioned (Acts 18:1–3). If we, then, read the Corinthian *synagōgē* mentioned in Acts 18:4, identified as the place of intense interaction between Paul and other Jews and non-Jews, as a neighbourhood association dedicated to the cult of the God of Israel in a primarily but not exclusively Jewish neighbourhood, we have reconstructed a scenario which makes ancient socio-institutional sense.[44]

The relevance for our task of this example is to show that, overall, based on how ancient institutional patterns worked, interaction between Jews and believers in Jesus was likely frequent, much more so than is actually evident in the texts that have been preserved. Further, this interaction was probably more often than not positive, or collaborative, as is evidenced by the negative reactions it evoked for centuries among especially church leaders and legislators more concerned with establishing clearer boundaries between 'Jewish' and 'Christian' communities than the majority was prepared to accept.[45] This means that while interaction between Jewish and non-Jewish followers of Jesus and other Jews in the early period often took place within the same institutions (Jewish associations ['synagogues'] of various forms) interaction did not end with the establishment of separate institutional settings. Indeed, while we know of separate institutions attended predominantly or even exclusively by non-Jewish Christ-followers already in the early second century, as evidenced by Pliny the Younger,[46] Jewish followers of Jesus continued for centuries to be present in institutional contexts where other Jews also gathered, even in Palestine. Their likely influence on the way rabbinic Judaism was shaped as it rose to prominence further supports a historical reconstruction in which Jesus-centred forms of Judaism continued in existence long into late antiquity.[47] We shall return to say a few more words on this as we look briefly at interaction on the private/domestic level of society.

In sum, the sources on interaction between Jews and the Jesus movement in association settings reveal a complex picture, where co-existence, co-operation and attraction defined relationships for the majority, based on a number of factors, including neighbourhood and occupational connections, even if conflict was also part of the picture, as already Paul's letters, Acts and Celsus' Jew[48] show us. There is a clear tendency here, in light of the previous findings related to the public civic sphere, namely that the literate elite is struggling to achieve separate identities and institutional settings. In the process of doing so they create literature highlighting and marking the 'religious' otherness of people behaving in ways they deem cultically inappropriate. In Christian literature, this is taken to the extreme as the rhetoric, evidenced in writings of various genres, including biblical commentaries, turns violently anti-Jewish.[49] While, as several scholars have argued, much of this anti-Judaism was in fact generated by inner-Christian conflict and attempts at limiting the influence of 'heretics' – the Jews serving as a rhetorical tool – we see how such attitudes demanding separatedness and conflict evolve, in identity-formation processes, into subsequent anti-Jewish legislation addressing very real situations.[50] It would seem to me that, considering the workings of ancient societies, especially the associations, interaction between (a) Jewish and non-Jewish members of the Jesus movement, (b) Jewish members of the Jesus movement and other Jews, and (c) non-Jewish Christians and Jews who were not Christ-followers, was bound to be quite frequent and mostly positive in nature, based on various factors and connections both cultic and other. It was likely this type of general interaction

on what is often called the grassroots level that generated a sense of urgency with the elite in these various groups, wishing, for political and other reasons, to establish and maintain uniform and separate social and religious identities and behaviour. This general picture is confirmed when we look at evidence relating to the private/domestic sphere of society.

Interaction in private/domestic settings

Proceeding to the private sphere of society, speaking of interaction between individuals is, to some degree, related to these individuals' interaction as members of the groups discussed above. The writings of the Church Fathers, for example, can be seen as representing leading voices in church institutions, although they give expression to views which are also their own, as individual Christians. I have chosen here to treat their writings primarily as representative of leadership attitudes within their respective communities, avoiding equating them with the people – the majority – they aim to influence. Apart from what may be said about interaction among individuals based on realities implied by the rhetoric and rulings in the public sphere and among association-like institutions, it is often difficult to identify attitudes and interaction between individuals, *as individuals*, especially in the domestic sphere and among people in general (the majority). Under this heading I shall give only a few brief examples where the evidence suggests certain attitudes and possible patterns of interaction. Before doing so, we should perhaps state the obvious: individuals with diverse 'religious' identities interacted – needed to interact – with one another in various ways in ancient societies, based on factors relating to aspects of identity other than those we call 'religious'. Thus, when we discuss interaction under this heading, while we shall focus on interaction which is explicitly related to 'religious' aspects of people's identities, this should not mislead us to think of people as if they were generally acting based solely on 'religious' convictions.

If we look first at literary evidence, Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* seems to be an obvious source of information on our topic. It is difficult, however, to assess to what degree the text relates to a historical event. Do we find here examples of a 'real' dialogue situation, a Jew and a Christian engaged in a polite discussion about issues like the 'true Israel', the status of Jewish law in Christian settings, and in what way, if at all, Jesus' status as the messiah is proved by the holy scriptures? Or should we rather treat the dialogue as fictive, a literary phenomenon? While the dialogue may indeed be fictive, it seems to me best to understand the text as representing concerns that were real as Christ-followers, whether Jewish or not, and other Jews interacted intellectually.[51] If we read the text in this way, two things stand out.

First, the statements by Justin and his dialogue partner that Jewish leaders prohibit the members of their communities from interacting with Christians mirror the sentiments of Christian leaders as they try to control their congregations.[52] Such rules are, of course, evidence of the widespread practice of precisely such interaction among ordinary Jews and Christians. It seems, thus, that leaders on both sides aimed at foregrounding certain 'religious' aspects of people's identities, and prescribed separateness as a tool to maintain distinct communities and practices. However, the very fact that Trypho and Justin are described as engaging in an extended conversation implies, like the rules of separation mentioned in the text do, that such attempts at isolation by the leaders were unsuccessful among ordinary people.

Second, in *Dial.* 47 Justin explains that while some (non-Jewish) Christians avoid any contact with Jews who believe in Jesus as the Christ and keep the Jewish law, he himself is of the opinion that these Jews, too, will be saved. He continues to argue that if these Jewish believers in Jesus:

> [c]hoose to live with the Christians and the faithful, as I said before, not inducing them either to be circumcised like themselves, or to keep the Sabbath, or to observe any other such ceremonies, then I hold that we ought to join ourselves to such, and associate with them in all things as kinsmen and brethren.

Indeed, Justin continues to affirm even the status of non-Jews who, as Christ-believers, have converted to Judaism and keep the law: 'But I believe that even those, who have been persuaded by them [i.e. Jewish believers in Jesus] to observe the legal dispensation along with their confession of God in Christ, shall probably be saved'.

This type of attitude may be interpreted as revealing a setting in which Jewish believers in Jesus shared, or wished to share, (institutional) space with non-Jewish Christians; Justin's suggestions seem indeed to speak to the issue of how to relate to them in predominantly mainstream Christian contexts. The text also indicates that conflicts existed based on these very issues. In any case, it is clear that the views expressed by Justin were not shared by most leaders in the emerging mainstream church. In the end, what we see here might be an individual's response to a (widespread) situation where mutual curiosity and willingness to engage in communication existed between Jews, including Jewish believers in Jesus, and non-Jewish Christians on the grassroots level, across what leaders understood as ('religious') boundaries. Such interaction would be precisely what would have caused leaders on both sides to issue guidelines and rules aimed at curbing it. There is further evidence supporting the suggestion that this type of situation was, indeed, more widespread than scholars have previously thought.

We know from Chrysostom's sermons that individuals continued to disregard rulings about behaviour expected in Christian group (association) settings into the fourth and fifth centuries, and persisted in their practice of attending Jewish synagogues and practice aspects of Jewish law and customs. In fact, the adoption of Jewish practices by Christian individuals seems to have been at a high around the fourth century, triggering responses from various leadership bodies. As several scholars have pointed out, among these practices that leaders felt a need to prohibit we find the keeping of the Sabbath (and if worship took place on the Sabbath, the practice of not reading the gospels together with scriptures); rabbis blessing first fruits as Christians were harvesting; eating with Jews during their festivals; the eating of unleavened bread during Easter; celebrating Passover with Jews; entering a synagogue. Indeed, even Christian religious leaders were prohibited from celebrating festivals with Jews, receiving unleavened bread from them, and, somewhat surprisingly, from wearing phylacteries.[53] Figure 11.5, a column fragment from Laodicea incised with a menorah and a cross, appears to reflect such practices, which disregard what later became boundary markers between religions.

It should be noted that the cross has not been superimposed over the entire menorah, and that the menorah has not been erased. Rather, the cross replaces only the seventh, central candle. Reading this menorah and cross against the background of the rulings of the Council of Laodicea in 363 CE, which aimed at prohibiting practices such as those mentioned above, merging what these leaders thought of as distinct 'Jewish' and 'Christian' identities, yields interesting questions with regard to Jewish and Christian interaction, as also pointed out by the excavator of the site where the column was found (Şimşek 2006).

Karin Zetterholm suggests, appropriately, that such legislation may not only reflect judaising tendencies among non-Jewish Christians, but, indeed, could be understood as indicating the presence of Jews in mainstream Christian communities, even in leading positions.[54] In other words, while scholars have often interpreted rules against judaising as a way to prevent non-Jewish Christians from taking up Jewish practices, along the lines of Paul's critique of such behaviour, we may need to rethink the picture and allow for the possibility that Jewish believers in Jesus to a much larger degree than previously thought were present in and influenced Christian communities.[55]

Now, it seems to me reasonable to assume a rather complex scenario arising from everyday interaction between people, in which we find on the grassroots level individuals that may be identified and categorised as follows: (a) gentile Christians who understood their 'religious' identity to exclude what they identified as Jewish law, practices and customs; (b) gentile Christians who adopted selectively various Jewish customs and laws, without much thought given to what their leading theologians would understand as religious boundary markers; (c) gentile Christians who converted to Judaism, understanding their 'religious' identity to include both adherence to Christ and the fulfilling

Figure 11.5 A column fragment from Laodicea incised with a menorah and a cross. The column on which the menorah and cross were carved belonged to the lower colonnade of the Composite order in the two-storied Nymphaeum A. The Nymphaeum was dedicated to Septimus Severus, repaired during Diocletian's rule, and finally destroyed in an earthquake in 494 CE (Şimşek 2006: 343). Image courtesy of www.HolyLandPhotos.org

of the Jewish law; (d) Jewish believers in Jesus, who observed Jewish law, as they had done already before joining the movement; (e) Jews who, retaining their Jewish identity, were 'Christianising', i.e. Jewish individuals who adopted selectively some elements of Christian thought and symbols, without considering too carefully what their leading theologians and halakhic experts would understand as religious boundary markers; (f) Jews who understood their religio-ethnic identity to exclude what they identified as (non-Jewish) Christian beliefs and practices.

While categories (a)–(d) and (f) have received attention in scholarship, option (e), corresponding to option (b), has rarely been contemplated as far as I know. Still, not only would such behaviour make sociological sense, there is also some archaeological evidence that, although difficult to interpret, may support the existence of individuals behaving in precisely this way.

In Sardis, a row of shops, dated to around 400 CE and backing onto the monumental synagogue and the bath and gymnasium complex, have yielded finds which have been understood as revealing the shop owners' religious identity: Christian, Jewish or pagan (Crawford 1996: 38–47, 70, 1999: 168–177). What interests us here is John Crawford's interpretation of the *realia* found in the shops as evidence that Jews and Christians lived side by side in apparent harmony.[56] As Keir E. Hammer and Michele Murray have pointed out, there are some indications that may reveal a more complex situation (Hammer and Murray 2005: 175–194). Among the discoveries in a shop (E12–13) identified as

Jewish based on the presence of two marble fragments incised with menorahs, we find also a weighing device which top is decorated with a cross. While Crawford assumes that the Jewish owner left the cross on his device instead of erasing it because it did not mean anything to him, Hammer and Murray have suggested what seem to me more probable explanations. Either the owner was a Jew who both knew and embraced what the cross meant, or he may have been a non-Jewish-Christian who was 'judaising'. Pointing to the various rulings against judaising tendencies in the region, they lean towards the latter suggestion. The two interpretations may not, however, be mutually exclusive, since what is termed 'judaising' in contexts within mainstream churches may in fact be caused by the presence of Jewish Christ-believers in those churches.[57] What seems unlikely, however, is the suggestion that a Jew in Sardis at this time, who owned a shop backing onto the synagogue, would not know or care about a symbol such as a cross, and therefore would not remove it.

Despite the inherent unlikelihood of a scenario in which a Jew in this time period would not recognise or care about Christian symbols, and so be happy to display them at home, this type of explanation has been common among archaeologists when Christian symbols have been found in spaces identified as Jewish. In En Gedi, for example, both Jewish and Christian symbols have been found on everyday items in Jewish homes, dated to the fifth or sixth century (Hirschfeld 2007). The excavator suggests that the Christian cross apparently had no significance for the Jewish owners of the house. Noting that there was a Christian settlement not far from the Jewish village, it seems more likely, however, that we may have here an example of our fifth category above: a Jew who adopted selectively some elements of Christian thought and symbols, without considering too carefully what their leading theologians and halakhic experts would understand as religious boundary markers; that is, a scenario mirroring what we find in mainstream Christian communities at other places, where leaders tried to curb judaising behaviour.

A further example concerns the existence of a *ChiRho* monogram on a third/fourth-century lamp found in a Jewish catacomb in Beth She'arim (Hammer and Murray 2005: 188). Again, the excavator suggests that the symbol was either not noticed or known by the Jewish person who bought the lamp (Avigad 1976: 188). While this is an interpretive option, of course, which, as Hammer and Murray note, may be more reasonable than in the later cases of the crosses, the cumulative effect of these findings should, at the very least, make us consider the sociologically likely scenario that Jewish individuals, just as much as non-Jewish Christian individuals, did not understand boundaries between religious options in the same way as their leaders did. The mosaic floor in the Beth Alpha synagogue may, further, indicate a similar disregard for boundaries between 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' enforced in later periods, even at the community level, and scholars are increasingly considering the likelihood that we find in rabbinic literature attempts at countering alternative visions of Judaism, including Jesus-centred forms of Judaism.[58]

Certainty with regard to the interpretation of the archaeological material cannot be had, of course. However, the almost consistent avoidance in the scholarly literature of the interpretations suggested here, indicating blurred boundaries not only for individual Christians but also for individual Jews, seems to indicate a certain bias in favour of distinct Jewish and Christian communities already in late antiquity, at least on the Jewish side of the equation. Such assumptions about clear-cut boundaries rather belong in the later medieval and modern periods, however, and supporting evidence for fixed (rabbinic-)Jewish identities among ordinary people already in the period we are concerned with here is, in fact, largely lacking.

Concluding reflections: the so-called parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity

Many, or perhaps even most studies on Jewish and Christian interaction aim to say at least something on the issue of what is usually, and problematically, referred to as the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity.[59] Scholars often conclude, rightly in my view, that the process in

which the distinct Jewish and Christian identities represented by mainstream forms of Judaism and Christianity today emerged was complex and extended over several centuries. We can no longer assume, as has been common, that rabbinic Judaism stood prepared to take over responsibility for and define Judaism already in the wake of the fall of the Jerusalem temple; that process, in which rabbinic Judaism was formed and became mainstream in Jewish societies, took centuries. Similarly, in a simultaneous process both parallel to and intertwined with the rise of rabbinic Judaism, the formation of non-Jewish Christianity, the first explicit signs of which we find in the writings of Ignatius of Antioch,[60] was quite protracted, lasting beyond Nicaea.

What complicates the picture is the simple fact that we have to deal with the evidence we have access to on different levels, as we have attempted to do here (public/civic, associations and private/domestic), and differentiate between how people (the majority) usually tended to interact, and the patterns of behaviour the leading figures (the minority) wished to enforce. Thus, institutional separation, which likely occurred quite early and represents a 'parting' of sorts, is not an indicator of the creation of separate 'religious' identities ('Jews' and 'Christians'). Rather, such separation occurred *within* Judaism as Jesus-oriented Jews established associations in which the cultic component consisted of Christ-focused worship of the God of Israel. As the non-Jewish Christ-believers rose in number in such settings, we find further institutional separation, this time between Jewish and non-Jewish members of the Jesus movement. While this separation was likely the decisive process which eventually led to what we today call 'Christianity', as we have seen above it was by no means a straightforward development, and many individuals, both Jewish and non-Jewish, continued to express, in practice, an identity which blurred the boundary between what later became distinct categories for all: 'Jew' and 'Christian'.

We should also reckon with the likely scenario that alongside Jesus-oriented Jewish groups, which may have included among them non-Jewish members, we find non-Jewish associations, which had little or nothing to do with Jewish communities, but whose worship was centred around the Jesus figure.[61] These non-Jewish groups, together with those non-Jews who separated themselves from Jewish Christ-followers, carried within them the seed which evolved into modern Christianity. In the process, Jesus-centred forms of Judaism were marginalised from two directions – emerging mainstream rabbinic Judaism on the one hand and non-Jewish Christianity on the other.[62]

Throughout the first five centuries, then, the period covered in this chapter, interaction between people identifying as Jewish, whether believers in Jesus or not, and non-Jewish individuals and groups identifying as Christ-followers, was varied and complex. In brief, what prevents us from speaking of Jewish and Christian interaction in generalised terms is precisely this diversity, and the existence of individuals and groups identifying as Jews, but who engaged in Christ-centred worship of the God of Israel. 'Jewish and Christian interaction' is, then, strictly speaking, from this perspective a medieval and modern, rather than a Late-Antique, phenomenon.

Notes

1 On the creation of the concept of 'religion' in the Western world, see most recently Nongbri (2013). On 'religion' and its effects on readings of Paul, see also Nongbri (2015: 1–26).
2 Boyarin (2004: 21–57).
3 Boyarin argues that significant developments took place between the fourth and the fifth centuries, i.e. around the upper time limit for the present chapter, which he identifies as the 'orthodox Christian invention of religion' (2004: 21).
4 This focus on ethnicity has led some scholars to suggest that we should speak about 'Judeans' rather than 'Jews' in this time period; see Esler (2003: 19–76); Mason (2007). For the view that the translation 'Jew' should be retained, see Runesson (2008: 59–92). The issue is discussed extensively in *Jew and Judean: A Marginalia Forum on Politics and Historiography in the Translation of Ancient Texts* (Los Angeles, CA: The Marginalia Review of Books, 26 August, 2014).
5 For discussion, see Runesson (2015: 53–77).
6 This does not mean that 'ethnicity' as a discursive category became obsolete in Christian writings; cf. discussion by Buell (2005).

7 As witnessed by Chrysostom and several other sources.
8 For discussion of the archaeological evidence for aspects of this process see, e.g. Sauer (2003).
9 Cf. K. Zetterholm (2014: 127–153). See also Reed (2003: 189–231); Fonrobert (2001: 483–509).
10 For extensive discussion of the implications of this institutional context for our understanding of Jesus' aims, see Ryan (2016). The same terms were also used to designate another type of institution, the Jewish associations. Contrary to Jewish associations, public synagogues existed only in villages, towns and cities where Jews were in charge of administration, and they belonged to the community, not to a specific Jewish interest group, such as, e.g. the Pharisees (cf. *m. Ned.* 5:5). These institutions were open to all, men and women alike, and there is no mention of any restrictions with regard to the participation in meetings of any specific groups and/or individuals. Public synagogues also housed law courts and archives, and it is likely that they also, as evidence from the Diaspora suggests, functioned as treasuries and were the place where slaves were manumitted. For source material and discussion thereof, see Runesson *et al.* (2008).
11 On the term 'nation' as applied to antiquity, see discussion in Goldblatt (2006: 1–27).
12 See discussion in Runesson (2016: 11–26).
13 Cf. Acts 5:33–39 where we find a prominent Pharisee saving the lives of Jesus' disciples as they are threatened by members of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem.
14 On Antipas' long rule, see Jensen (2010).
15 Several other Messianic claimants and their followers, all of whom threatened the status quo in the land in the first century, are mentioned by Josephus; none of them were, however, successful in their aims. For sources and brief discussion, see Evans (2005: 431–443); cf. Stegemann and Stegemann (1999: 165–186).
16 E.g. Mark 2:2; 10:46; 11:18, 31–32; Matt. 7:28–8:1; 19:1–2; 22:45–46; 26:3–5; Luke 4:42–44; 14:25; 22:2; John 7:31–32; cf. Acts 5:12–18.
17 I include the chief priests, elders and scribes employed in the temple administration among these civic leaders, since the temple was a political institution as much as a religious one.
18 See above, n. 15.
19 Even in the case of Jerusalem, Josephus notes that when James was executed, other Jews, including king Agrippa, reacted negatively and rejected the whole procedure of assembling the Sanhedrin for this purpose (*AJ* 20.201–203). This indicates that this was an unusual measure taken against members of the movement.
20 *m. Mak* 3:12 (*ASSB*, No. 86); cf. Acts 22:19 (*ASSB*, No 73; cf. Nos. 19, 20).
21 For sources, see Linder (1987). The key texts are the *Theodosian Code* and the Justinian Corpus.
22 Roman decrees on Jewish rights are reproduced in Josephus' *Antiquities*; for texts, translations and comments, see *ASSB*, Nos. 93 (Delos), 108 (Ephesus), 109 (Halicarnassus), 110 (Miletus), 113 (Sardis), 114 (Sardis), 120 (by Augustus; unspecified locations) and 180 (Rome).
23 Cf. Acts 18:12–16, where the author recounts a story about a case involving Paul, in which the proconsul of Achaia, Gallio, refuses to be judge, implicitly acknowledging the Jesus movement as a Jewish group, and the Jewish community as having more autonomy than later centuries would allow them.
24 For example, regulations applied to officials in synagogues (referred to as 'priesthood') were treated in a way analogical to laws governing privileges of clergy in the church.
25 This law was re-affirmed in 397 (Linder [1987], No. 27).
26 Linder (1987) No. 40. (However, a law from 408 CE explicitly prohibited Jews from mocking Christians during the celebration of Purim.)
27 Linder (1987) No. 21. This law was followed up by Theodosius II in 423, where the wording of the text reveals that the legislator understood such behaviour not only to be unlawful but also to be un-Christian; Linder (1987: 86) and Nos. 47–49.
28 Linder (1987) No. 47.
29 In 535 CE, Justinian prohibited the maintenance of synagogues in North Africa, ordering these buildings to be converted into churches. See Linder (1987: 74).
30 Linder (1987) No. 45. Note that Jews could still serve in municipal offices and practise law, with some limitations.
31 Linder (1987) Nos. 37, 38.
32 Cf. Jacobs, (2004: 200–209).
33 On Jewish mission in the Talmudic period see, e.g. Goodman (1994). Goodman notes that the rabbis developed an increased interest in proselytism in the third and fourth centuries. See also Feldman (1993: 342–415). Partly drawing on legal material from Late Antiquity, Feldman concludes: 'Far from withdrawing into itself or restricting itself to a conflict built around the interpretation of sacred texts, Judaism boldly confronted the church' (1993: 414). See also Setzer (1994: 146), who argues that Jews and gentile Christ-followers competed for gentile converts.
34 For collections of sources relating to associations in the Graeco-Roman world, see Kloppenborg and Ascough (2011); Harland (2014). See also the website of Harland, 'Associations in the Greco-Roman world: An expanding collection of inscriptions, papyri, and other sources in translation' (http://philipharland.com/greco-roman-associations/).

35 For discussion of these terms, see Runesson (2015: 53–77). Of course, these same terms were employed in different settings also by other, Graeco-Roman, institutions, which further highlights the necessity of abandoning preconceived ideas about the nature of ancient institutions based on later applications of this terminology.

36 On the categorisation of (non-civic) synagogues as well as Christ-groups (remembering that the latter could be, in some cases, understood as sub-groups within the former) within the broader category of associations, themselves evidencing diversity within the category, see, e.g. Richardson (2004: 111–133, 207–221) and, most recently, Last (2016b).

37 Human interaction is, of course, related to and intertwined with aspects of individual and group identities, including what we would call religious identity. For our purposes here, it is of some importance to note that 'religious' identity is not the only factor involved when individuals and groups with specific religious identities interact. Cf. Rebillard (2015: 293–318). We need to consider, as Rebillard phrases it (2015: 293), how and when it matters in everyday life to express specific religious identities, or parts of those identities.

38 On the translation of *pistis* as referring to aspects of 'loyalty' rather than 'belief', see Morgan (2015). The meaning of *apistoi* thus carries a nuance of 'those who are disloyal'.

39 Last, 'The neighbourhoods of Christ-believers in Roman cities and towns', paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the SNTS in Montreal, 2016, to be published in a forthcoming volume entitled *Christ-Followers' Groups: Neighborhood Networks, Occupational Guilds, and Trans-Local Writers' Organizations*. I am grateful to Dr Last for permission to refer to this work here. See also Last (2016b: 399–425).

40 In Rome, Jews lived primarily in the suburbs, first in Transtiberinum, and later in the Campus Martius and the Subura (see Richardson 2004: 114). According to Josephus, Jews in Alexandria lived mostly in the so-called Delta district (*BJ* 2.495). This does not mean, of course, that there were no Jews living in other parts of the city, as Philo reminds us of as he notes that Jewish 'prayer halls' (*proseuchai*) existed in each quarter of the city (*Legat*. 132). It is likely, then, that where such buildings were constructed, Jews lived close by, which in turn means that groups of Jews lived in each section of the city, likely in the same neighbourhoods.

41 On the existence of the so-called Godfearers, see most recently Fredriksen (2016: 25–33). As Fredriksen notes, contra Kraemer (2014: 61–87), 'the term is both useful and usable, its range of meanings fittingly elastic, its attestation in ancient evidence of various sorts as secure as our evidence usually gets' (2016: 25). Just as other associations could have 'strangers' among them as members – for example, not all members of the association of the purple-dyers may have been purple-dyers, but some individuals could have joined the group based on other connections, such as the network provided by the neighbourhood in which the association met, cf. Last (2016b: 24–25) – non-Jews could frequent the meetings of Jewish ethnic groups, which were based on neighbourhood or occupational connections.

42 For evidence, Fredriksen refers to Origen (*Hom. Lev*. 5.8; *Sel. Exod*. 12.46), and John Chrysostom. For discussion, see also Murray (2004).

43 While Stark may sometimes overstate his case, and some of his assumptions about the ancient material are problematic (cf., e.g. Reinhartz 2006: 197–212), the overall case made remains a challenge to historians writing on Christian origins, especially when considered from the perspective of ancient institutions, which likely provided the networks needed for the spread of the group.

44 On the connection between ethnicity and other identity markers as Jews gathered in 'synagogues', cf. the well-known passage in Tosefta, Sukkah 4.6, which describes 'the great synagogue' in Alexandria. In this building, a huge basilica-like structure, people sat according to their occupation, which, as the text notes, facilitated for newcomers to identify people in the same trade and so be able to find ways of making a living. As noted above, 'synagogue' should here be understood as incorporated under the genus association. This means that a Jewish synagogue institution could vary in its form, function and membership depending on the network it served. For example, a guild of Jewish weavers could be and was called a 'synagogue'; the cult of that guild would likely be connected with the ethnic identity of the members, and thus directed to the God of Israel. Such cult consisted primarily of, as we know from other sources, reading, expounding and discussing Torah on Sabbaths, as well as of a number of other rituals performed weekly and on festivals. Cf. *Leviticus Rabbah* 35.12, which mentions 'the mine workers synagogue' in Lydda (Lod). As the editors of the English translation of Midrash Rabbah notes, 'synagogues were often formed of members engaged in a particular craft', Freedman and Simon (1977: 453). Thus, for centuries, in Jewish settings the term 'synagogue' could refer to Jewish associations centred on ethnic, cultic and neighbourhood connections as well as those drawing membership from occupational networks; all of them, though, would involve worship of the God of Israel.

45 See n. 51 above. For Chrysostom, note *Against the Jews* 1.3, 4 (PG 48, 847, 848).

46 Pliny's reference to changes in temple attendance and the food market – increased sales of meat – when people identified as Christians left their Christian convictions behind, reveals that they were not Jews to begin with; see *Letters* 10.96. Cf. Ignatius of Antioch, who seems intent on bringing about precisely such a situation with regard to separate institutions, excluding Jewish modes of being a Christ-follower: *Magn*. 10.3. Justin Martyr, however, aims at overcoming enmity based on such different practices within the movement: *Dial*. 47.

47 See discussion by K. Zetterholm (2014, 2016: 102–120, especially 114–117).
48 See, e.g. discussion by Setzer (1994: 147–151).
49 Jerome would be one well-known example, Chrysostom another. Augustine, however, represents a different attitude; see Fredriksen (2010).
50 For discussion of rhetoric versus social realities, see Jacobs (2004). Cf. Shepardson (2015: 147–182).
51 So also Freyne (2014). While not all scholars agree, this is the majority view, as Wilson (1995: 260–261) points out.
52 Cf. discussion in Setzer (1994: 144–146). On Justin, see also Wilson (1995: 258–284) and Freyne (2014: 334–340).
53 On this, see K. Zetterholm (forthcoming: 5–6). I am grateful to Dr Zetterholm for sending me her article before publication, and for allowing me to refer to it here.
54 K. Zetterholm (forthcoming: 6), referring also to the author/redactor of the pseudo-Clementine literature as an example of Jesus-oriented Judaism intent on observing the Torah.
55 Cf. discussion of Justin Martyr above; see also Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.26.2 and Origen, *C. Celsum* 5.61, 2.1, both of whom mention Torah observant Christians; cf. K. Zetterholm (forthcoming: 6). See also Trebilco (forthcoming): 'We need to remind ourselves that many of the early Christ-believers were of course ethnically Jewish. When we consider what might be thought of as "Jewish ideas" among Christ-believers, we need to ask if they come from Jews or from Jewish Christians or from Gentile Christians who have adopted Jewish attitudes? Perhaps such ideas and practices came from Jewish Christians who of course continued to see themselves as Jews, rather than from non-Christian Jews' (Trebilco forthcoming: 8). I am grateful to Professor Trebilco for sending me his article before publication, and for allowing me to quote it here. This type of scenario would also match but take further the general approach of Rodney Stark, to the spread of the Jesus movement in the early centuries.
56 Contrasting, for example, the rhetorically violent anti-Judaism expressed in the second century by Melito in his *Peri Pascha*. On this text, see Cohick (2000).
57 Cf. nn. 53–55 above.
58 See discussion in K. Zetterholm (2014). On Beth Alpha, see K. Zetterholm (2016: 116–117).
59 For discussion and problematisation of various aspects of these processes, see the contributions to Becker and Reed (2003).
60 On separation processes in Antioch, see M. Zetterholm (2003).
61 As evidenced by Pliny the Younger, see above, n. 46.
62 For discussion of this process with a focus on archaeological remains, see Runesson (2007: 231–257).

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PART III

Community formation and maintenance

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12
MISSION AND EXPANSION

Thomas M. Finn

Some preliminaries

Of all the religious groups in the Greco-Roman world, why did an obscure group of Palestinian Jews spread to become the established religion of the Roman Empire in less than four centuries?

A ready answer is the conversion of the emperor Constantine (306–337) coupled with his 'edict of Milan' (313), which legalized and subsequently privileged Christianity. To be sure, without Constantine the Christian story would be very different. Yet even before Constantine, Christianity had already arrived as a force to be reckoned with. The puzzle that plagues students of antiquity is how and why?

For ancient and medieval Christians, the only important piece was the miracle of divine dispensation; yet early this century students of the ancient world have turned up a number of other important pieces. They range from early Christianity's ability to adapt to its surroundings (Harnack 1908b: 464), to Christianity as the road to revitalizing an unraveling Greco-Roman urban social world (Stark 1996). Although pieces abound, a vital piece has largely been taken for granted—conversion. But first, a sketch of the results of conversion.

Early Christian spread

The numbers

A thumbnail sketch of early Christian expansion might well start with numbers. The earliest source, the Acts of the Apostles, tracks the growth of Christianity from 120 converts gathered in Jerusalem just after Jesus' death (Acts 1:15) to many thousands (Acts 21:20) by the sixties of our era. Assuming a total population of sixty million in the Roman empire, a recent attempt to track Christian numerical growth suggests the following profile (Stark 1996: 7)[1]:

Year	*Number of Christians*	*Percent of population*
40	1,000	.0017
50	1,400	.0023
100	7,530	.0126

(continued)

(continued)

Year	*Number of Christians*	*Percent of population*
150	40,496	.07
200	217,795	.36
250	1,171,356	1.9
300	6,299,832	10.5
350	33,882,008	56.6

The figures assume a growth rate of 40 percent per decade until 350, after which the percentage (though not the numbers) declines. Although the figures correlate well with the few facts that ancient literature and archeological remains have turned up, they are projections based on what is known about the empire's cities. Nonetheless, they are a framework within which to view the growth of Christianity. Yet empire-wide figures are only initially helpful, because early Christian literature, archeology, and contemporary social analysis confirm the fact that Christianity was an urban phenomenon. Consider two cities and two different periods.

First the Christians in Rome. Of the twenty-two Mediterranean cities that numbered 40,000 people or more, Rome was the largest, having a population of about 650,000 at the end of the first century. At the .0126 percent cited above, there were a few less than 1,400 Christians in the city at the end of the first century, whereas in the year 250, when Rome's population was some 700,000, there were about 14,000 (possibly as many as 20,000: Grant 1977: 7). The numbers tally with literary evidence cited by Eusebius that the Roman church had about 155 in ministerial positions (presbyters, deacons, subdeacons, lectors, exorcists and the like) and supported some 1,500 'widows with those in straightened circumstances' (Oulton and Lawlor 1973: 114–15; Eusebius, *HE* 6.43.3).

Yet population growth was not uniform. In the small (no more than 15,000) Palestinian city of Gaza at the end of the fourth century, for instance, there were 280 Christians, augmented by 163 converts, including men, women, boys, and girls (Grant 1977: 9–11; MacMullen 1984: 86–9). If the above profile were applied uniformly, one would expect 8,000 Gazan Christians, yet they numbered only 443, or 3 percent. The size of a city and its location were important variables, which cautions one about the application of projections. There were other variables as well, often ominous: persecution, plagues and epidemics, famine, warfare, abortion and birth control, and a 25-year life expectancy—in short, the fragility of ancient life. Clearly, some of the ominous variables were at work both favoring and restricting the growth of Christianity.

The geography

By the end of the first century the records show churches in forty-two cities of the empire (Vander Meer and Mohrmann 1958: 2–14).[2] Although the majority were in the Roman provinces that constitute modern Turkey, communities of Christians ranged from Rome in the Latin west to Edessa in the Syrian east, and from Philippi in Macedonia to Cyrene in Libya. By the end of the third century, Britain had at least 5 churches; Spain, close to 60; France and Germany, nearly 100; Roman North Africa, over 100; not to mention the extensive growth of churches in Italy and Egypt, and the remarkable expansion in Roman Turkey, which remained the most populous area of the early Christian world. They were almost all urban and so strongly entrenched that the emperor Diocletian (284–305) could look out on a Christian cathedral from his palace in Nicomedia (western Turkey). He ordered it razed in 303.

Although there were rural Christians, information about them is slender at best. The life of one celebrated Christian missionary, however, sheds some light on the matter, Gregory the Wonder-Worker (210–260). Born into a prominent family in Pontus, a backwater province bordering on the Black Sea, where great estates (like his family's) surrounded small towns and villages, Gregory went to

Beirut (Lebanon) to study law and then to Caesarea in Palestine to study with the great Alexandrian Christian teacher (190–254), Origen. In the course of his five years in Caesarea, Gregory became a Christian. He returned to Pontus (about 240) to become the province's missionary bishop. We learn from his fourth-century biographer that when Gregory returned to Pontus there were only seventeen Christians, and when he died, there were only seventeen Pagans. Nonetheless, it was not until the Constantinian settlement that Christianity became a fairly widespread town, village, and countryside phenomenon. Only then, for instance, does the term 'Pagan' (*paganus*/country-dweller) become an adjective, usually pejorative, for the non-Jewish and non-Christian religions of the empire.

Regrettably, the historical sources confine their attention primarily to the Greco-Roman world. Christians, however, went east early. By the end of the second century they were well established in Persia (modern Iraq and Iran), centered themselves in two important eastern cities, Nisibis (Syria) and Edessa (Turkey), and spoke and wrote Syriac, an eastern dialect of the Aramaic spoken by Jesus. In the fourth and fifth centuries, Syriac Christianity flourished, producing a number of important figures and works. And if the *Acts of Judas Thomas* (Schneemelcher 1965: 426–531), which describes the conversion of the royal household in the early third century, can be credited, Syriac Christianity had penetrated all the way to what is now the modern Indian province of Kerala.

Christians did not just move east; they also moved across the northern borders of the empire—the Danube and the Rhine rivers—and not altogether voluntarily; often they were captives. From about 190 CE, as we will see, the empire slid gradually into helplessness and anarchy. Among the causes (and effects) was the incursion of the Germanic tribes into the shores of the Black Sea, the Balkans, and Greece. Indeed, in 251 the Goths defeated emperor Decius and his army at Beroea in Greece, killing the emperor and his son. Among prisoners of war, the Goths took Christians, who brought their religion with them. Although a later example, Ulphilas ('Wulfila,' 311–382) embodies this kind of encounter between Christianity and the barbarians. Born to a Christian family in Cappadocia (central Turkey), he was carried off with his family and raised among the Goths. Eventually he became a bishop (341), settled down in Moesia (Yugoslavia) and, in spite of every kind of hardship, converted many Goths to (Arian) Christianity with ever-increasing success. One key to his success was the fact that he translated the Bible into Gothic (up to that time not a written language).

While the Goths were crossing the Danube, Franks and Alamanni crossed the Rhine and broke into Gaul, some of them penetrating as far as Spain. In both countries a long-established Gallic and Iberian Christianity met them. Martin of Tours (316–397) embodies the effort to Christianize the barbarians in western Europe during this period (Brown 1996: 102–11). Born to Pagan parents in Swabia (Hungary), as an eighteen year-old he became a convert, soldier, and adventurer. Eventually he became a monk, founding in 360 (with Hilary of Poitiers) the first known monastery north of the Alps (Ligugé). Because of his reputation as a holy man and healer, he was elected bishop of Tours in 372. For the next twenty-five years he promoted Christianity and monasticism, giving himself wholeheartedly to evangelizing the rural (and Pagan) population of Gaul (France).

Social status

Growth was not just in numbers, neither was spread only geographically; Christians advanced socially. Some stood fairly high on the social scale, some low (Hopkins 1998: 207–13). We know the names of about 1,000 Christians of the first and second centuries and often their social standing, education, legal status, language, and ethnic and religious origin. Luke, to whom the Third Gospel and Acts are attributed, was a physician (Col. 4:14); Onesimus was a fugitive slave (Phlm. 16); Cornelius was a legionary line officer (centurion) of the Italian Cohort (Acts 10:1); Clement of Rome (*c.* 96), a freedman member of the imperial civil service; Justin Martyr (100–165), a philosopher; Vibia Perpetua (d. 203), the daughter of a provincial Roman patrician from Carthage, and her fellow martyr, Felicity, a slave; Phoebe, a deacon from Corinth's Aegean seaport (Rom 16:1); Chloe, a householder from Corinth (1 Cor. 1:10).

Although Paul says about his Corinthian Christians 'not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth' (1 Cor. 1:26), and the well-informed pagan critic, Celsus (late second century), claimed that Christians converted only women, children, slaves, and fools (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.55 [Chadwick 1965: 165]; Hoffmann 1987: 72–3), the evidence from the first three centuries suggests otherwise. Granted that the majority were low on the social ladder, the list of names just cited indicates that converts to Christianity came from several strata. Further, to be able to write (a fact to which early Christian literature attests with vigor) meant that a number of Christians were in the top 2 percent of Roman society (Hopkins 1998: 210). Finally, to be low did not mean that one had to stay low. One could move up; the trick was to acquire the valued criteria of birth, legal standing, wealth, learnt skills, ability, achievement, and style of life (Hopkins 1965: 239–48). In fact, upward mobility was widespread.

The primary avenues were careers in the Roman legions, education, and imperial civil service (Finn 1982: 31–7). When Augustus (r. 27 BCE–14 CE) established the empire, for instance, he set up an effective public administration. His creation, the 'Imperial Household' (*familia Caesaris*), depended on cadres of lesser officials whom he drew from his slaves and freedmen, trained and seasoned slave-born professionals—he could count on them because they were his men. Of the training schools, the most famous of the schools was in Rome itself, close to the imperial palace. A graduate could expect to enter the emperor's service at about twenty, accept a variety of administrative appointments, and expect to be manumitted at about age thirty, and, after that, to receive senior appointments. Such an administrator would retire solid in comfort and status.

Many slaves, Christians among them, travelled this route. Perhaps, more important, their offspring were freeborn with citizenship, permitting them to travel further and faster than their forebears on the avenue of upward mobility. Studies of status-change in the empire indicate that it generally took three generations to effect substantial change. An example of Christian mobility is Clement, reputed to be third bishop of Rome (88–97) and the author of a letter called *First Clement* (*c.* 96) addressed to, and at points chiding and correcting, the church at Corinth. Already in the fifties of our era, Paul mentioned that there were Christ-followers in civil service (Phil. 4:22). Clement was just such a one. He appears to have been assigned to the administrative department at Rome that might now be called the foreign office or state department. He would have been able to write good Greek, handle complex calculations, and exercise authority through correspondence with outside agencies, especially the provinces. As it turns out, Clement also owned a house in the city near the Forum, the center of Roman public life, which was a sign of considerable standing and substance. Not surprisingly, Clement was prominent in the Roman church. Not only did he handle the foreign affairs of the community (he had no hesitation in interfering in the affairs of the church at Corinth), his home may have been among the earliest of the house churches there.

Although space does not permit exploring the other avenues of upward mobility, suffice it to say that many Christians could be found in education and the military, not to mention trade and commerce. By the middle of the next century (250–260), when emperors Decius and Valerian initiated the first empire-wide attempt to root out Christianity, Christians at the top of the social pyramid, namely, senators and equestrians, were deprived of their rank, lost their property, and, if obdurate, were executed. Similarly, their counterparts, Christian wives (*matronae*) lost their property and were banished. As for those in imperial service, they were also subject to confiscation and to a return to slavery (Burns and Jensen 2014: 1–32).

Conversion

Christians had come a long way between 50 and 250. But how had they managed it? An answer requires a consideration of the hows and whys, namely, conversion. Religious conversion remains a subject of intense scholarly interest (Rambo and Farhadian 2014).

The lineage of a word

In the English-speaking world, the prevailing image of conversion is contained in a celebrated seventeenth-century hymn, 'Amazing Grace,' which limns conversion as a sudden and humanly inexplicable inner transformation. In the twentieth century, psychologists tended to reinforce this hymnic view. According to Harvard psychologist, William James (1902), it was a process by which the self, divided, guilt-ridden, and unhappy becomes unified, free of guilt, and happy because of religion.[3] Paul on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:1–9) and Augustine in the garden at Milan (*Confessions* 8.29 [O'Donnell 1992: 101–2]) rapidly became the models, underscoring conversion as the result of 'amazing grace.'

With the arrival of new eastern religions on American shores in the 1950s, however, the image changed. Social scientists took an interest in these new religions and conversion, establishing a broader model that delineates conversion as a gradual process, involving (1) the total life-setting of the potential convert; (2) an identity crisis; (3) an active search for a new identity, meaning, and purpose in life; (4) encounter with a new religious reality that engages a wide range of social and psychic needs; (5) continual and mutual interaction with the community that embodies the new religious reality; (6) a clear-cut choice between one's previous way of living and a new way that yields commitment; and (7) gradual transformation of attitudes and values mirrored in conduct (Rambo 1993: 16–18). In short, conversion is an extended and many-layered process, which does not necessarily entail crossing boundaries from one religion to another. The author of 'Amazing Grace,' John Newton, for instance, was a Christian who turned to a more intense and, as he thought, more authentic Christianity.

Conversion in antiquity exhibited these characteristics, including conversion to Christianity which blended two ancient traditions (Aubin 1962). The first was Greek and Roman, and emphasized 'turning' (from and to). For Plato and his many followers, conversion was a personal process of turning away from an old way of seeing and existing to a new way, one that put one in touch with reality itself. The second was biblical, emphasizing the personal. Conversion was a return to the one God, a turning which involved repentance, reconciliation with God, and rededication to his service. Recent research has continued to probe the dynamics of conversion to early Christianity. One approach builds on the insight that Graeco-Roman and Mediterranean religions, including Christianity, were framed in the language of patronage, benefaction, and loyalty, so that an understanding of ancient conversion must include these phenomena (Crook 2004). Another approach argues that the earliest Christian conversion occurred from a 'Judean' ethnic group rather than a 'Jewish' religion, with the two entities involving being different in nature and asymmetric to one another, and that this needs to be taken into account in understanding the process (Esler 2015).

Records of conversions

For the ancient Pagans, Jews, and Christians, conversion was a gradual process interlaced with ritual. To be sure, there was a decisive moment on which everything turned as if on an axis, but, as the ancients saw it, every conversion had a history. Although the process can be amply documented for Pagans and Jews as well as Christians (Finn 1997: 67–136), our immediate concern is with the latter. The documents that follow are snapshots of the process, which, of course, differed, though not significantly in structure or function, at different places and times during the years 150 through 450 of our era.

The first document is the diary account of the arrest and execution of a young Roman woman convert in North Africa in 202/203, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, two women who are profiled in Chapter 49 of this volume; similarly the second, a document from third-century Rome,

the *Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus* (Cumming 1976: 8–31); and the third, a fourth-century set of instructions or homilies on baptism and the eucharist from Jerusalem and its bishop, Cyril, *The Mystagogical Catecheses* (Yarnold 1994: 67–97), coupled with an eyewitness account, *The Diary of Egeria*, a western pilgrim in the city about 380 (Gingras 1970: 49–128).

Perpetua's diary

Among the ominous variables that deeply affected Christian mission and expansion for 300 years was persecution (Burns and Jensen 2014: 86). The very possibility darkened many a door, reinforcing the tendency of Christian communities to keep very much to themselves and draw clear and well-protected boundaries between themselves and their world. Such is the data from the most influential account of martyrdom in antiquity (Salisbury 1997: 1–20). The heart of the work (chs. 3:1–10:15) is a diary by Perpetua, an educated, well brought up, and pious young Roman woman (twenty-two) from high society in Carthage (the family name was Vibius), a city of some 400,000, in the west second in distinction only to Rome. She was married and the mother of a two-year-old son (a *matrona*).

At some point, perhaps about the time she married, Perpetua and her brother (because he is unnamed, his surname, Vibius, is used hereafter) encountered Christianity in Carthage. Attracted, they became 'catechumens,' the technical name for committed inquirers. Rooted in the Greek word that gives us the English word 'echo,' it denotes one who hears oral instruction so attentively that it resounds in one's conduct.

What was the attraction for Perpetua and Vibius? Although she does not say, it doubtless had much to do with turmoil in the empire (Geffcken 1978: 1–113). From the years 96 to 180, there had been only five emperors; in the next 103, there were 29, almost all of whom would live and die violently. The army, which had been under civilian control, was now in control of civilian life. Even the civil service had become the preserve of the military, making it a heavy-handed and extortionist bureaucracy. The economy, the source of provincial prosperity, was racked with runaway inflation and escalating taxes. In short, the disintegration of an ancient civilization and the making of a new one seemed at hand (Brown 1978: 1–80).

Many in the empire of Perpetua's day, even those insulated from the disorder around them, sensed an inner disorder. They had grown up expecting easy access to their deities, to see and talk with them regularly, and to experience their protection. As the astronomer, Ptolemy, in the middle of the second century, put it:

> Mortal though I be, yea ephemeral, if but a moment I gaze up to the night's starry domain of heaven. Then no longer on earth I stand; I touch the Creator. And my lively spirit drinks immortality.
>
> *(Hingham and Bowra 1938: 643, n.621)*

Even for the pious of the empire, like the Vibius family, the divine world seemed to have spun away from the human, leaving a yawning gap. Moreover, the traditional rituals, the purpose of which was to keep the two worlds united, had lost their grip. The result was a moral, intellectual, and spiritual ferment evident from many inscriptions characterized by a longing for the divine. Some people coped with the longing by intensifying dedication to their ancient religious traditions; others embraced mysticism, magic, divination, oracles, or philosophy—or all five. Still others joined the rush hour of the gods from the east. Converts to these 'new religions'—and there were many—sought that lost intimacy with the divine by mounting quests for a new intimacy, accessibility, and assured protection. Robert Turcan's comment about the inhabitants of Rome is applicable across the ancient board, and surely to Carthaginians:

> Where the individual no longer plays an active, direct, and personal part in the running of [Rome], he inevitably loses interest and seeks responsibilities elsewhere, in other sodalities, other 'fraternities.' Religious micro-societies and 'mystery' sects assure him of a kind of reintegration and existence, when traditional frameworks and institutional authorities are in decline, failing in their mission.
>
> *(Turcan 1997:17)*

In short, the individual seeks to build a worldview or sacred world, that is, a new world of order, meaning, and purpose (Doran 1995: 1–7). As the conversion-criteria above suggest, the life-setting of many in the empire, including Perpetua and Vivius, occasioned a crisis of religious identity that prompted a search for a new way of ordering their sacred world. But how did they find it? Again, she does not say, but clues abound in their religious world. From the beginning, Christianity spread rapidly among largely ordinary people, who were responsive to demonstrations of power. The ancient world equated divinity and power; power was the essence of divinity for Jews and Gentiles, high and low, alike; and works of power authenticated the presence of divinity (MacMullen 1984: 10–42). Oracles, dreams, exorcisms, healings, to name a few, bore the stamp of true divinity, giving assurance of the presence and beneficence of the divine, an assurance essential in one's sacred world.

It is no surprise, then, that such events are highlighted in the New Testament and early Christian literature. The story-line in Luke and Acts is that God's Spirit empowers Jesus, the apostles, and early disciples, and miraculously accomplishes the rapid spread of Christianity in spite of every obstacle. The stimulus for this story-line was almost certainly the reality of charismatic phenomena experienced in the communities of Christ-followers from Pentecost onwards, for which 1 Corinthians 12–14 is our best evidence (Esler 1992). In emphasizing especially oracles, dreams, visions, and miraculous constancy, Perpetua's diary simply continues Luke's story-line. As for Carthaginian Christianity, the data from the first half of the third century indicate that the church there was 'Spirit-filled' (Robeck 1992:1–8), much as was the church at Corinth which Paul depicts in his correspondence with Corinth. For Perpetua, Vibius, and the other catechumens, God was not only near but in the Carthaginian church, a community knit by close personal bonds and attachments—Turcan's true 'sodality.'

Arrested with Perpetua were Felicity and Revocatus, slaves in the Vibius household. Perhaps they were the first members of the household to encounter the church, where they would have found a much gentler world of power than domestic slaves were accustomed to. If so, they may have been Perpetua's and Vibius' contacts, since the message generally went from bottom to top, and face-to-face encounters were close to the only kind of positive meeting points between Pagan and Christian (MacMullen 1984: 21). All four clearly found bonds and attachments which made possible that experience of the divine presence for which they longed. From the beginning of Christianity, extended networks of personal relationships and attachments were the primary means of the movement's spread, and the household was their embodiment.

But chance encounters with this new and different sacred world would not have secured understanding and commitment. Continual interaction was required, for which the training of catechumens (called 'catechumenate'), was designed, as we will shortly see. For Perpetua and the two slaves, hardly had their training begun when it took a sharp turn in an unanticipated direction. The emperor, himself an African (Septimius Severus), promulgated an edict (202) that outlawed conversion to both Judaism and Christianity. As converts-in-process, they were prime targets.

The edict prompted the arrest of a number of catechumens. From the diary we learn the names of at least six: 'Revocatus and his fellow slave Felicitas, Saturninus and Secundulus, and with them Vibia Perpetua' (*Passiones sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* 3 [Musurillo 1972: 3/108]). Vibius, for reasons unknown, was not arrested, but one more Christian was added later, Saturus, a leader in the church, who voluntarily joined the five to shore them up. Hardly had Perpetua been arrested when she was baptized and taken to a holding prison, a foul basement. Two deacons from the community managed

to bribe the jailers to give their charges respite. What had tried Perpetua more than anything at first was the fact that her infant son, starved of his mother's milk, was failing. The respite permitted her to nurse him, whom she then gave up to the care of her mother and brother.

Hard days followed. One of the catechumens, Secundulus, died in prison, and Perpetua's health broke. When she recovered, she got permission for her baby to stay with her, which, she says, made her cell a 'palace' (*Passiones sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* 3 [Musurillo 1972: 3/110]). Even so, there was her father's almost violent anger at what he regarded as her unreasoning contumacy. Her mother seemed more supportive and her catechumen brother, Vibius, was an ally; unfortunately, we hear nothing about her other brother and her husband. Although Vibius visited her frequently, her conversion seems to have torn the family apart. What dominates the account, however, is the familial interaction between the catechumens and the faithful: continual visits, material support, including the two deacons and the bribe, Saturus' voluntary surrender, and the concern for Felicity, who was eight months pregnant when arrested. She had her baby in prison, a girl, whom one of the women in the church brought up as her own daughter.

When Perpetua's harried father heard that the hearing before the governor was set, he came to persuade his daughter to renounce her new faith and friends. To no avail, for she had made her choice and commitment. The hearing soon followed. Arraigned before the governor and a large crowd, Perpetua's companions admitted their Christianity. 'Then,' we read, 'when it came my turn, my father appeared with my son, dragged me from the step and said: "Have pity on your father's grey head; have pity on your infant son. Offer the sacrifice for the welfare of the emperors"' (*Passiones sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* 6 [Musurillo 1972: 6/112–14]). She refused, and affirmed to the governor that she was indeed a Christian. All five were sentenced to violent death in a wild-beast hunt at the amphitheatre, and were returned in chains to prison. The day before the hunt, Perpetua and Saturus had striking visions (for her, one of many), which assured them that they would know victory in the morrow's test. Little remains of the amphitheatre at Carthage, but the ruins give us some idea of what it must have been like (Burns and Jensen 2014: figure 14), so also the Colosseum at Thrysdus (modern El Jem, Tunisia) southeast of Carthage (Figure 12.1) and the mosaic of a charioteer from the circus at Carthage now in the Bardo Museum in Tunis (Figure 12.2).

Figure 12.1 The Colosseum at Thysdrus (modern El Jem, Tunisia), south east of Carthage. Photo T. M. Finn

Figure 12.2 Mosaic of a charioteer from the circus at Carthage. Photo T. M. Finn

An eyewitness, the Christian to whom Perpetua confided her diary, recounts the deaths of the five. Further, it appears that more than one of the spectators, even one of the soldiers (Prudens), who participated in the execution of Saturus, were moved to become converts. Paradoxically, persecution, designed to stamp out Christianity, was an instrument of spread. Tertullian (160–240), Perpetua's contemporary and the most influential Latin thinker and writer before Augustine, wrote the governor, Scapula, several years (212) after Perpetua's death:

> Yet this community will be undying, for be assured that just at the time of its seeming demise it is built up all the stronger. For all who witness the noble patience of its martyrs, are struck with misgivings and inflamed with the desire to examine into the matter in question; and as soon as they come to know the truth, they straightway enroll themselves as its disciples.
> *(*To Scapula *5 [Arbesmann 1962: 5/161])*

Catechumenate in Carthage

The normal conversion process for Perpetua and her steadfast companions was cut short; thus, the diary does not speak of the catechumenate. But her brother's was not. For a sketch of what it was like, however, we can turn to Tertullian, who published the earliest treatise on baptism about 200 (Tertullian, *De baptismo* 1–20 [Evans 1964: 5–43]), and to an invaluable contemporary document from Rome, called the *Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus* (2–21 [Botte 1963: 1–103; Cumming 1976: 8–31]). Since Roman and North African practices were similar, Hippolytus permits us to fill in the blanks (also, Burns and Jensen 2014: 165–85).

If Felicity and Revocatus had been the initial contacts who interested Perpetua and Vibius in the church, at some point they would have brought them to the church building and the teachers early in the morning before the faithful arrived. They would have been asked a battery of questions about personal status (slave? free? married? etc.), and, for Vibius, also occupational questions to determine whether he was engaged in any forbidden or immoral activities. Were he, he would have either promised to desist or be rejected out of hand. As sponsors, Felicity and Revocatus had to go surety for the truth of their answers.

Clearly Perpetua and Vibius passed muster, successfully completing the rite of enrollment. From that point on they were 'hearers,' that is, catechumens under instruction, which appears to have been a blend of biblical readings and commentary, creedal (doctrinal), liturgical, moral instruction, interlaced with rites of worship, especially exorcism. Although belief and its content were vital, reformation of life was the litmus test conversion and that could be assured only with continual ritual interaction. With the other catechumens, they would have attended frequent, perhaps daily, instruction and prayer early in the morning together with the faithful. At dismissal, the teacher (perhaps, it was Tertullian himself) placed his hand over them, prayed, and sent them on their way. As hearers, Perpetua and Vibius were subject to frequent exorcism, a powerful and effective event and the sign of their marginal condition of betwixt and between being Christians. They would remain hearers normally for several years, but the time could be shortened if character and conduct showed the evidence of conversion at work. For Perpetua and her companions the evidence was unmistakable. For Vibius and the rest of the catechumens it continued to term.

At the end of their probation and instruction, there was another interrogation. The first, enrollment, began what turned out to be an intense screening, as well as formative, process. The second, later called 'scrutiny,' ended it. This time conduct rather than status was the issue. Had Vibius lived honestly? Honored widows? Visited the sick and the imprisoned? Done every good work? In short, had his values, way of life, and conduct demonstrably changed? Again, his sponsor—since Perpetua and companions were dead, perhaps the woman who was bringing up Felicity's daughter—would have to go surety for his answers.

Granted that he passed scrutiny, he was now one chosen for baptism and set apart from the other catechumens. Whereas he had been a hearer (*auditor*), now he was a chosen one (*electus*). The curriculum of instruction changed. He could now 'hear the Gospel' (Hippolytus, *Apostolic Constitution* 20 [Botte 1963: 42; Cumming 1976: 26]), and at the end of instruction he was exorcised. As the day of baptism approached (a Sunday, normally Easter), the bishop performed a solemn exorcism to determine whether he was 'free of every alien spirit' (Hippolytus, *Apostolic Constitution* 20 [Botte 1963: 42; Cumming 1976: 26]). Anyone who, in his judgment, had not heard the instructions 'with faith, for it is impossible that the Alien [Satan] should hide himself forever' (Cumming 1976: 26) was set aside. The scrutiny was to determine the extent to which Vibius' spirit had really changed.

After several weeks, on a Thursday (before Easter) Vibius and his fellow *electi* were instructed to bathe, and on Friday and Saturday to fast (presumably from both food and water). On Saturday night they assembled for a final solemn exorcism by the bishop. They then spent the entire night in vigil hearing the scriptures and commentaries (called 'homilies') on the readings.

At cockcrow on Sunday (Easter), solemn baptism began. Vibius formally renounced Satan and all he stood for, and the bishop anointed him with the oil of exorcism. A deacon descended with Vibius into the water as he professed an early version of the Apostles' Creed. The deacon then imposed his hand on his head, and asked him three questions, the first about his belief in God the Father, the second about the Son, and the third about the Holy Spirit. To each question Vibius answered, 'I believe'; after each answer he was immersed in the water, then anointed with the perfumed 'oil of thanksgiving.' When he had dried, he put on a white garment, and, when all the newly baptized were assembled, the bishop imposed his hand over them and offered a prayer that spelled out the meaning of baptism:

> Lord God, you who have made them worthy to receive remission of sins through the bath of regeneration by the holy Spirit, send into them your grace that they may serve you according to your will; for to you is glory, to the Father and the Son with the holy Spirit, both now and to the ages of ages. Amen.
>
> *(Hippolytus,* Apostolic Constitution *21 [Botte 1963: 52; Cumming 1976: 20])*

The bishop then imposed his hand on the head of each, pouring oil on their heads, anointing with the sign of the cross on their foreheads, and offering each a kiss of peace and welcome.

But the rite of initiation (as it came to be called) was not over. They processed to the assembly room with a table for their first celebration of the eucharist, which included bread and three cups: one of water to symbolize the interior cleansing accomplished by baptism, one of milk and honey to symbolize their entry into the Promised Land, and a cup of wine to symbolize the blood of Christ who redeemed them. Finally, they were the cynosure of special celebrations during the week following, which centered around the eucharist and homilies that underscored the meaning of baptism and their experience of the catechumenate.

In retrospect, Vibius gradually turned from the sacred world of his Roman upbringing (he would bring much of it with him) and was initiated into the new sacred world of Christianity. The heart of the process, the catechumenate, was the long oral course of biblical, creedal, and moral instruction embedded in communal rites of worship, especially prayer and exorcism. Finally, he was ritually born into a new family, renouncing an old network of kinship relations and acquiring a new one. His rebirth climaxed three weeks of increasingly complex, dramatic, and demanding rites.

Such was the early Christian catechumenate. The ancients found such 'mysteries' immensely attractive. The data from the mystery religions reveal that such ritual processes excited and aroused the senses of those left cold by the more formalistic worship of the Roman gods (Finn 1997: 68–89). The sound and rhythms, color and visual contrasts, sanctuaries, gestures, ritual enactments, evocation of death and resurrection, deprivations, and personal attention all conspired to open a new sacred world and give body and soul to deep-buried aspirations.

Vibius and the other *electi*, however, were not only drawn to the Christian mystery, they were refashioned by it. Their interaction with the Carthaginian church had a clear pattern in which instruction and ritual were inextricably bound together. The process was cognitive—a new cultural, social, and religious world was built. At the same time it was performative—the new world was embraced and entered (Turner 1986). Conversion was enacted in a deeply symbolic drama, one that resists reduction to its psychological, social, or religious components. For the ancients, at least, it was a drama in which the divine and human intersected, resulting in transformation.

Why did some choose Christianity, when other eastern religions beckoned? They do not say, but the question is not beyond answering. Intelligent and articulate Pagans and Christians faced off with each other in the early centuries. Pagans accused Christians of plagiarizing doctrines and rites from them, and Christians, who considered the Pagan deities demons, replied in kind. The result? An apologetical standoff.

But the entire encounter between Paganism and Christianity was not a standoff. Paganism was pluralist, disparate, and often plagued with contradictions. During the third century, these emigrating religions from the east, or, rather, their deities, individually tended to acquire supremacy. The Egyptian Isis, for instance, gradually came to embody deity itself; she was the 'Queen of Heaven' and the 'Lady of the Waves.' This movement toward one supreme deity among the many, called 'henotheism,' was but a symptom of the problem in Paganism: the profusion of deities led to confusion in people's minds and insecurity in their hearts. They met the longing for the divine and the demand for supernatural assurance, to be sure, but as one Pagan philosopher, Plutarch, put it: 'Their good fame flourished only a short time, and then, convicted of false glory and imposture . . . like smoke arising, they flew off' (Plutarch, *Moralia* 364E [MacMullen 1981: 96]). The record shows that in their search for what they considered 'true divinity,' the ancients expected a deity which authenticated itself by 'wide and long-lasting impact' on one's life (Turcan 1997: 333–4). For Vibius, and catechumens generally, the encounter with Christianity effected that deep and long-lasting impact. Martyrdom, like Perpetua's, was the ultimate test of the impact, but there were other tests which arrested the attention of even the most pious Pagans. The court physician and philosopher, Galen (d. 200), observed:

> For their contempt for death . . . is patent to us every day, and likewise their restraint in cohabitation . . . and they also number individuals who, in self-discipline and self-control in matters of food and drink, and in their keen pursuit of justice, have attained a pitch not inferior to that of genuine philosophers.
>
> *(Galen,* Plato Arabus *1.99 [Ferguson 1993: 564])*[4]

But behind these demonstrable changes stood the conviction expressed in the Christian 'rule of faith' that an almighty God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, forgiving sins, and offering them risen and eternal life (see 2 Cor. 5:19). The pre-Constantinian catechumenate proved to be a profoundly effective means of conversion and, as such, a principal organ of the mission and expansion of Christianity.

Conversion in Jerusalem

As the population statistics above suggest, the fourth century changed everything. Baptism in blood disappeared and the church moved out of the catacombs into the Forum, a move that came from three emperors: Galerius (305–312) and Constantine (285–337), who enacted the edicts of toleration (311 and 313), and Theodosius I (379–396), who established Christianity as the religion of the empire.

Predictably, the move had enormous consequences. From a cult to be shunned, the church became an institution to be embraced. Whereas social and legal jeopardy had forced the church to guard its gates sedulously for 300 years, social and legal toleration threatened to open the gates to a flood of people who, for a hundred different reasons, wanted to enter. The problem was how to keep the floodgates in place and prevent the flood from washing away the tenacious faith of the early centuries. The solution turned on the catechumenate, which prompts a trip from Carthage to Jerusalem, where the solution first comes to light (Finn 1997: 188–211).

With toleration, Christian eyes and feet turned to the holiest of holy places, Jerusalem. Constantine and his mother, Helena, were among the first pilgrims, she to find there the cross of Christ and he to build two striking basilicas at the sites of Christ's death and resurrection: the Martyrium to commemorate his death, and the Anastasis to commemorate his resurrection. In between the two churches he built a garden court, where a cross stood to mark the place of Christ's death. Israel's Holy City, which had become a Pagan city 200 years earlier (132 CE), was transformed into the city of the death and resurrection of Jesus. People streamed to Jerusalem precisely to be there where Jesus had lived, taught, died, and risen, and whose power and presence remained. That longing for the divine, coupled with the ancient association of divinity and space, simply intensified with the coming of Constantine.

How many people there were in fourth-century Jerusalem is unknown, but the projections charted at the outset indicate that by mid-century the majority (56 percent) were Christians. But even if we do not know numbers, we know about the structure of the church in Jerusalem. Chief was the bishop, Cyril (315–387). Gathered around him as his councilors were the presbyters. They preached and taught, read the scriptures, led much of the worship, registered catechumens, exorcised, and ministered in the surrounding villages. In addition, there were exorcists and deacons. And among the faithful, three ranks existed: numerous ascetics (monks and nuns), the baptized, and the catechumens. It was a Greek-speaking community, though Palestinian Aramaic and some Latin could be heard on the streets and in church. Catechumens were numerous and of two kinds: those who had been enrolled and those who had been accepted for baptism (the *auditors* and the *electi*, respectively, in Carthage). Given the favored position of the church, it was an obvious advantage to be a catechumen. As in Carthage, catechumens were considered Christians by aspiration and anticipation, if not by initiation. Almost all were Gentiles and Pagans (for over 200 years Jews had been forbidden entry into the city under pain of death). Some were simply curious hearers; some were

courting a potential Christian spouse; some were trying to please someone or win favor; some were Christian children and young adults; some sought social advantage and economic gain; some simply wanted to belong somewhere; but all had personal contact with Christians.

Whatever reason brought them to enrolment, the work of the catechumenate was to change the faithless into the faithful, however long that might take. The advantage of having this first class of catechumens, the hearers, was that it gave people a threshold status in the church without opening the floodgates. They would be hearers until they were ready for baptism. In fact, many delayed for years. Most of those raised in Christian households as catechumens, for instance, were baptized as adults. Even Pagans like Constantine (who considered himself the 'bishop of those outside') was baptized practically on his deathbed, and Augustine of Hippo was a catechumen for thirty-three years (354–387).

Some catechumens, however, actively sought baptism. For those, the Jerusalem church adapted an institution already in place by the year 330: the forty-day fast in preparation for Easter. The 'forty days' quickly became the technical term for the pre-Easter season ('Lent' in English). Cyril seems to have been the one who united the preparation of catechumens chosen for baptism and the 'forty-days' of ascetic preparation for Easter. They coincided admirably, because the function of both was to renew the community; ascetic preparation to replenish the community's fervor, and baptismal preparation to replenish its numbers and vigor. Social scientists have long realized that rituals, especially rites of initiation, are remarkably effective in replenishing the bonds that knit a community together (Turner 1969: 94–130). The kind of devout and closely knit community that attracted and nourished Perpetua, Vibius, and companions continued its sway in fourth-century Jerusalem and elsewhere.

Those who had made the decision for baptism assembled in the Martyrium at the beginning of Lent. Enrollment was like the rite in Carthage, save that Bishop Cyril did the interrogating. If nothing turned up, the candidate was accepted; if the result were otherwise, he or she was rejected, with the demand for amendment of life.

The 'chosen' now embarked on an eight-week odyssey. Fasting was enjoined (a bland meal of gruel and water once a day was customary) and bathing was out. Prayer and instruction coupled with exorcism was the daily fare for the first seven weeks; the daily rite lasted from 6:00 to 9:00 am. Exorcism, which came toward the end of the service, was intense and designed to shatter the ill-disposed: the chosen lay prone with faces veiled, while the exorcists (each of the chosen had one) harassed them to force the evil spirit in the subject to give way to the Holy Spirit. The intent was therapeutic: gradual withdrawal from the power of one's religious culture and past life and habits.

Once exorcised, the chosen, both men and women, sat in a circle around Cyril, surrounded by their sponsors and the faithful. He devoted the first four weeks to biblical reading and commentary (an eyewitness calls the commentary 'catechesis'); in his commentary he emphasized the applicability of the Bible to his hearers' moral lives.

On Monday of the fifth week, Cyril changed the curriculum to the creed, and for the next three weeks explained each of the articles of the Jerusalem creed (the creed of Nicaea). Coached by sponsors, family, and friends, the chosen sought to understand the creed better and commit it to memory.

On Sunday of the eighth week (called 'Great Week' then, and now, 'Holy Week'), the last stage of the odyssey began. Monday through Wednesday were crammed with dramatic liturgy generally at the appropriate biblical site. Excitement intensified with the approach of Thursday evening. The chosen broke their fast at a meal in honor of the Last Supper and bathed, to commemorate Jesus' washing of his disciples' feet.

The crucifixion was the focus on Friday. The rites consisted of the veneration of the cross (Helena's find?), which lay on the altar of the Martyrium, and at three in the afternoon, faithful and candidates assembled before the Constantinian cross in the garden court. Cyril sat before the monument, and the Gospel account of Christ's Passion was read, followed by other New Testament readings interspersed with appropriate psalms.

The moment for which the candidates had long and rigorously prepared began Saturday evening; the vigil for Easter had arrived. Faithful, godparents, friends, family, and candidates assembled in the Martyrium. The vigil consisted of twelve readings from the Bible on carefully chosen themes to illuminate the meaning of baptism; psalms and meditations were interspersed.

With the last psalm, the candidates were led out of the Martyrium, across the garden court, to the baptistery. As in Carthage, the candidates were ritually stripped and anointed. Then, one by one, they faced west, stretched out a hand, and in words of renunciation, broke their ancient pact with Satan. They then faced east, where the baptismal font stood and paradise was believed to lie. A new pact was made, the terms of which were a simplified form of the creed Cyril had taught them. They were then anointed.

Newly anointed and naked, they processed to the baptismal font. Each candidate entered the pool and, as at Carthage, was immersed three times in the font. Cyril made dramatically clear the significance of the immersion:

> What a strange and astonishing situation! We did not really die, we were not really buried, we did not really hang from the cross and rise again. All this he did gratuitously for us [on this very site], so that we might share his sufferings by imitating them, and gain salvation in actuality.
>
> *(Cyril,* Catecheses Mystagogicae *2.5 [Yarnold 1994: 76–7])*

After they came up from the font, the newly baptized were anointed with aromatic oil on the forehead, ears, nostrils, and, finally, on the chest. The imposition of hands immediately followed, signifying the descent of the Holy Spirit.

Baptismal candidates no longer, the newly baptized now could affirm, 'I am a Christian.' Each one put on a white garment, received a candle to signify enlightenment, and processed to the Church of the Resurrection to symbolize their own resurrection. After that, at the Martyrium, they were welcomed into their new family and celebrated their first eucharistic meal. The week following—Easter Week—was marked with special celebrations of their new birth.

Conclusion

Christianity continued to spread from generation to generation and place to place in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. Its mission remained consistent: to initiate people, Christians and non-Christians alike, into a sacred world centered, as one of the earliest missionaries put it, on 'God in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us' (2 Cor. 5:19).

Our primary concern, however, has been with the spread of that early Christian sacred world within the world of Greece and Rome and beyond. From 120 Palestinian Jews in the year 30 CE, Christians grew to number over thirty million in 350. Located largely in cities from Britain to India and the Balkans to the Sahara, they came to be the established majority. Conversion was the key. Conversions in antiquity—Christian, Jewish, and Pagan—involved an extended process, comprising cognitive and performative elements inextricably bound together, instruction *and* ritual. The goal was transformation.

A profound change in the sacred world of Greco-Roman Paganism in the first three centuries of our era occasioned numerous conversions to both Judaism and the new religions from the east, including Christianity. The close bonds between the human and divine worlds of the traditional religions had begun to unravel, leaving many with a longing for a secure and lasting intimacy with the divine. The spinning apart of the human and divine worlds provoked an identity crisis for many, which, in turn, provoked a quest for a new and more secure sacred world. Above all, the religions

that attracted the searchers offered what was missing, or at least diminished, in their old way of piety: a redolent sense of divine accessibility and intimacy. Even more important, the searcher perceived that the religion embodied the divine in a community where a wide range of reassuring bonds and personal networks linked them to the divine.

The question for both searcher and community was how to accomplish initiation into the new religion. The answer of the early church was the catechumenate, which involved the three stages which we have considered in Carthage and Jerusalem: (1) rites of separation from the old way of life and piety (enrolment); (2) an in-between stage where one is part neither of the old nor the new way (the long period of instruction); and (3) incorporation into the new (election and baptism in Carthage, and Lent and baptism in Jerusalem). The second stage was critical in the spread of early Christianity. Anthropologist Victor Turner calls it the 'liminal' stage, about which he says:

> The attributes of liminality or liminal personae ('threshold people') are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classification that normally locates states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, convention and ceremonial.
>
> *(Turner 1969: 85)*

The catechumens were just such 'threshold people.' Precisely as 'liminals,' they were gradually refashioned for their baptismal transformation. What is remarkable about this liminal stage is that liminality is a fertile source of rituals and symbols, not to mention myths, philosophical systems, and works of art. The abundance of rituals in the catechumenate enabled the catechumens to enact their conversion; it was a process of becoming, the ancient image for which was death and rebirth. In addition, as Turner notes, the rites of the liminal stage refashion the community, burning away the failings of lax devotion and life, and revitalizing the members' own conversions.

We have considered the Carthaginian church as a case study of conversions to Christianity before Constantine. The initial encounter was the result of personal contact and example, as in the case of the Vibius household. Thereafter, as the catechumenate demonstrates (Judaism and the Mysteries had counterparts), the encounter was continual and mutual, extending over several years before conversion was established and full membership given. In the process, the catechumen was prepared for and faced a clear-cut choice between an old way and a new one that demanded commitment, even if (as Perpetua and companions reminded Carthaginian Christians) it cost one's life. The litmus test was the transformation of attitudes and values mirrored in conduct.

Because of the Constantinian settlement, the social world of the fourth century changed remarkably. Although longing for the divine remained, motives that prompted the quest differed widely. The Jerusalem church provides a window on fourth-century conversion. Children raised in Christian households were customarily enrolled as catechumens in infancy; opportunism prompted some adults to seek catechumen status; for others marriage was the motive; and for still others, it was simply expected in a predominantly Christian society. Lest the flood of potential converts wash away the faith and piety of the first three centuries, the Jerusalem church, while retaining aspects of the hearer-stage of the catechumenate, developed the Lenten catechumenate for those chosen for baptism. Centered around the biblical sites of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, the catechumenate in Jerusalem sought to attract and initiate candidates into the Christian sacred world by identifying them with the life, death, and resurrection of Christ through an extended symbolic drama in sacred sites. The effect of that drama on the entire population was palpable. Egeria, who witnessed the drama in about 380, comments in her diary about the people's response. On (Holy) Thursday night, for instance, when the account of Jesus' arrest was read in Gethsemane just outside the east wall of the city, the ululations of the people could be heard throughout the city, and at the center of the city

'all without exception were ready at hand, the old, the young, the rich, the poor, everyone' (Egeria, Itinerarium Aetheriae 36.5 [Pétré 1948: 232; Gingras 1970: 109]). Egeria leaves one with the impression that all of Jerusalem participated in a week-long symbolic Passion Play.

Although there is little question about the overall effectiveness of the catechumenate in the mission and spread of Christianity during the first four centuries, the differences in the Christian situation in the Constantinian and pre-Constantinian worlds are sufficiently striking to make any detailed comparative assessment hazardous. Eventually, the catechumenate would recede, largely in the face of the predominance of infant baptism, the massive barbarian conversions in the early Middle Ages, and a sacred and social world strikingly different from that of the Greco-Roman world.

Notes

1 The earliest serious attempt is that of Harnack 1908b: 1–32; but see also Grant 1977: 1–12, and MacMullen 1984: 102–19, who thinks that there were about five million at 300. As of this writing, the most recent attempt is Hopkins 1998: 192–6, in which his scale, though positing a growth rate of 3.5 percent compounded per year, is similar.

2 But see Hopkins 1998: 198–207.

3 The Jamesian view (James 1902: 189) prevailed for decades, influencing the scholar who wrote the earliest seminal study on conversion in antiquity, Arthur Darby Nock (Nock 1933: 1–16). Nock distinguished between 'adhesion' and 'conversion.' By the former he meant participation in one's traditional religion; by the latter, a deliberate turning from indifference or an earlier form of piety to another—crossing from former religious boundaries to new ones (Nock 1933: 7). He concluded that only prophetic religions (Judaism and Christianity) required conversion, while the other Greco-Roman religions required only adhesion.

4 The passage is preserved only in Arabic, which Waltzer sets out (1979: 15) and discusses (1979: 89ff.).

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13

THE DEVELOPMENT OF OFFICE IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Mark Edwards

If we follow Weber in his division of authority into three types – charismatic, rational, or legal and traditional – the third has little relevance to ecclesiastical ministry in the early Christian era. Priesthoods were not inherited, and though property was, we can only guess at the influence that was exercised over primitive congregations by the owners of the houses in which they gathered. For Weber, the mark of Catholic Christianity is a bureaucratic priesthood whose authority is of the rational or legal type, and he follows Rudolf Sohm (1892–1923) in the belief that this had quickly supervened on an earlier phase in which the leaders of the new movement had no legal or traditional credentials and therefore owed their following entirely to their own gifts (Weber 1927: 124; cf. Haley 1980). In response, historians of all denominations have denied that the evidence lends itself to such a clear antithesis. The truth appears to be that the restraint of charismatic gifts began with the apostles, that the exercise of them never implied a negation of authority, and that some at least were indulged, or even encouraged, by the emerging magisterium. The most judicious narrative will be one that, in the words of Edouard Schweizer (1961: 230), finds a way 'between Rome and Sohm'.

The issue is too often addressed without noting that there are quite distinct phenomena which might all be termed charismatic on Weber's principles, but which need not coexist in the same religious personality. The most evident sign of holiness is the possession of supernatural abilities, which in the early church included prophecy, *glossolalia* and the power of healing. It was often the erudite laity, not the clerics, who denied these; Augustine, for example, saw contemporary miracles only when he became a bishop (*City of God* 18). A second grace conferred by merit rather than position is a virtuous life, especially one enhanced by willing abstinence from food, sleep, sexual intercourse or lucrative employment. Such austerities, often characteristic of the clergy, may also be practised by lay imitators. Charismatic status can be obtained in a third, more questionable manner by conspicuous tribulation, and above all by imprisonment or martyrdom. The Christian hierarchy was at pains to show that such events might give a man the status of a confessor, but would not suffice to invest him with the prerogatives conferred by ordination. Nevertheless, we shall see that it was only in the fourth century – and then in opposition to schismatics, not confessors – that the episcopate could hope to disarm its rivals with the 'institutional' argument that sanctity resided in the office, not the man.

The charismata and the threefold ministry

The letters which are most securely attributed to Paul have nothing to say about the functions of ecclesiastical ministers. We do not know if there was an appointed celebrant for the eucharist in

Corinth; we do not know who was charged with reading out the Apostle's letters in the churches of Thessalonika, Corinth, Galatia or Rome. The Epistle to the Philippians (1:1) addresses their *episkopoi* or overseers, and *diakonoi* or servitors, and the latter term is also applied to Phoebe in the greetings attached to Romans (16:1); what the duties of these orders were we cannot say. In Acts, the church at Jerusalem is administered by a council of *presbuteroi* or elders (Acts 21:18), Paul is credited with a valedictory speech to the *presbuteroi* of Ephesus (Acts 19:17ff.), and he and Barnabas are represented as establishing *presbuteroi* in the churches that they founded (Acts 14:23). The inception of the later threefold hierarchy is sometimes traced to the Apostolic Decree of Acts 15:23, which was issued in the name of the apostles, presbyters and other brethren. But if we take the apostles to be a permanent class of ministers, we must explain how Paul can claim this title for himself (1 Cor. 9:1) when his only calling is that of an itinerant evangelist. Only in the Pastoral Epistles (often dated to the early second century) do we meet the word *episkopos* as a companion, not an alternative, to *presbuteros*. Even then the moral traits required of both are similar, and distinct responsibilities are not prescribed, unless it be that the function of an *episkopos* is to ordain the presbyters (Tit. 1:5). The main purpose of the author is not to sketch an ecclesiastical taxonomy but to warn his readers that if the man failed to dignify the office, the office would not justify the man (1Tim. 3:1; Tit. 1:5–7).

The thesis that the first Christians inherited the administrative structures of the synagogue (whatever these were) is likely to be true of those communities in which the majority were of Jewish descent (Burtchaell 2004). When, however, we read the word *episkopoi* (overseers) in Paul's epistle to the Gentile church at Philippi, we must remember that this term was applied not only to the political shepherds of Israel but to the treasurers of many ancient cities. The so-called middle recension of the letters ascribed to Ignatius, a Gentile bishop and martyr of the early second century, gives definitive form to the threefold order of ministry. Although familiar arguments against its authenticity are resuscitated from time to time (e.g. by Barnes 2008), this correspondence cannot be a product of the late second century, as its theology does not sit well with the rule of faith upheld by the episcopate in that era. If not Ignatius himself, then, it is some early disciple who tells the church of Tralles in Asia Minor to acknowledge 'the bishop as a type of the Father, the presbyters as a council of God and a bond of the apostles and the deacons as Jesus Christ' (*Trallians* 3.1). In the light of later ecclesiology, it is striking that it is the presbyters, not the bishop, who have the sanction of the apostles; more striking still that Ignatius, though he is not a member of the congregation, has the authority to underwrite the primacy of its bishop. Does he possess this in a metropolitan capacity as Bishop of Antioch (as in Von Harnack 1908: 1, 463), or in his personal character as a martyr-in-waiting? The first seems most unlikely at this epoch, so it is reasonable to surmise, with Walter Bauer (1971: 60–94), that the new concept of a monarchical episcopate was not yet so well established as to prevail without a charismatic sponsor. Since Ignatius thinks it necessary to defend the bishop's character from detraction in some localities, there is no divorce between ministerial status and the attributes of the minister. Neither is there any sure sign that the head of the congregation is regarded as a priest. The demand that he or a surrogate should preside at the eucharist (*Smyrnaeans* 8.1) guarantees the unity of the flock, not the efficacy of the sacrament. It is teaching, not a word of consecration – possibly then the ministry of presbyters, not the bishop – that will make the rite a 'medicine of immortality' to the people, for whom heresy is a 'medicine of death' (*Ephesians* 20.2; *Trallians* 6.2).

Denunciation of heretics is loudest in the literature and anecdotes that gathered around the memory of John. In two of the Johannine letters a single presbyter, and in the Apocalypse a single angel, are responsible for the direction of whole churches. Polycarp, the long-lived bishop of Smyrna, was supposedly John's disciple, while in a letter by Bishop Polycrates of Ephesus we read that the evangelist was a 'sacrificing priest who wore the mitre' (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.31.3). Around 180, Irenaeus, presbyter or bishop of Lyons, professed to quote from John's own lips by way of Polycarp, as well as citing the latter's curse on Marcion (*Adversus Haereses* [*Against Heresies*] 3.3). He thus invokes on his own behalf the principle of succession or *diadochē* which, as Von Campenhausen (1919: 160) notes, was first employed to validate the teaching of philosophers in pagan schools, and

then by Gnostic groups to support their claim to the possession of secret gospels. Purity of doctrine could be verified, according to Irenaeus, by reference to the great centres of Christianity, any one of which could boast a line of presidents reaching back to the apostles. Such pedigrees would not suffice, however, without the consensus of the faithful, and the two converge in an enigmatic passage in which Irenaeus urges the *principalitas*, or pre-eminence, of Rome (*Against Heresies* 3.2). He is urging something less than Papal primacy, as Molland (1950) and Abramowski (1977) demonstrate. Neither are catholicity and apostolicity of any weight without good conduct in the minister: that Polycarp and Ignatius suffered martyrdom is a fact of some importance to Irenaeus, who expects that clerical rank will be united with the second and third of the charismatic types defined above.

It is often said that the first, or supernatural, type was repressed when the magisterial church was seized by a 'fear of freedom' (cf. Greer 1989). The *Didache* (a manual of uncertain date and perhaps of Syrian provenance on which Audet (1958) remains authoritative), a Greek manuscript of which was discovered in 1873, has been adduced as evidence because it contains directions for assessing the truth of prophecy and curtailing the abuse of that vocation. But of course it is where true prophets are most respected that the false ones seek disciples, and the *Didache* is so far from disparaging the prophets as a class that it declares them to be the high-priests of the congregation (13.3), and grants them the right to celebrate as much of the liturgy as they desire (10.7). A prophet may betray himself by avarice, but to test him while he is speaking is the unforgivable sin (11.7). Both in the Old Testament and in the New there are admonitions against false spirits, and this document adds little to these but the axiomatic principle that a prophet ought to use his gifts for edification rather than for gain. It would be equally tendentious to maintain that the ecstatic movement now called Montanism (see Chapter 43 in this volume) was opposed because the episcopate was bent on expelling prophecy. Montanus, whose apostles received a salary (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.18), can hardly have been intending a return to primitive Christian society. Trevett (1996 and in Chapter 43 of this volume) has stressed the role of women in the movement, but if they had set up a female clergy their detractors would have made it a charge against them, as they did against Gnostic groups. In fact, the indictments state that Montanus and his followers gave easy absolution to malefactors, disseminated the cult of a spurious martyr and took money for their labours in defiance of the apostolic teaching (Eusebius, ibid.). Whether any of this is true is not the present question; it is more germane to note that we do not hear that the veneration of martyrs is unlawful, or that prophets cannot absolve.

The heresy of the Montanists (such as it was) consisted in the imposition of fasting, chastity and novel penances on the ordinary Christian. Tertullian, the apologist of the 'new prophecy' in the early third century, argued that the world had reached its last days in which God would pour his spirit on all humanity. Everyone was now called to lead the spiritual or 'pneumatic' life in contrast to the 'psychics', or mere natural men, as he rudely termed the representatives of the catholic church. A similar dichotomy between psychics and pneumatics had already been drawn by Gnostics, who thus agreed in one thing with Tertullian – that there cannot be common ground between Christian rectitude and ordinary standards of proficiency or merit. In his later years, Tertullian was a stranger in the 'psychic' congregations, but, as Rankin (1995) reminds us, he seems never to have renounced his old conviction that the whole church is the keeper of the apostolic faith. He is certainly no free churchman in his writings, for while he believes, with scripture, that every Christian is a priest, he styles the bishop the 'highest priest', and while he appeals to prophetesses, he does not believe that women can be ordained (*De baptismo* [*On Baptism*] 17.5, etc.). At times, he shows an extravagant respect for the office, even while he stigmatizes the conduct of the most distinguished prelates. One of his targets, guilty of attempting to forgive the unforgivable, is still the 'Bishop of Bishops' (*De pudicitia* [*On Modesty*] 1.6–7); another, Bishop Zephyrinus of Rome, could have healed the schism of the Asiatic churches if he had only endorsed the preaching of Montanus (*Adversus Praxean* [*Against Praxeas*] 1). This comment shows, not only that an African could attribute some authority to Rome but that the episcopate in Asia was by no means so united against the 'new prophecy' as ancient and modern writers have supposed.

Popes and councils

Rome itself, it seems, had only lately perceived the value of the monarchical episcopate. Paul and Ignatius do not know of any, and the letter ascribed to Clement, which was written from the city in the late first century, does not tell us either the name or the status of its author. He seems to use the terms presbyter and bishop interchangeably (*First Epistle to the Corinthians* 44.4–5; cf 42.5), and while he alludes to the priests and Levites of the Jewish Temple (32.2), he does not equate these with the Christian orders. Unlike their Jewish counterparts, Roman leaders were not averse to new revelations, for they treasured that of Hermas, part of which was addressed to Clement (*The Shepherd of Hermas*, Vision 2.4.3). The Muratorian Fragment, perhaps the earliest canon of the New Testament (*pace* Hahnemann 1992), acknowledges both this and an Apocalypse of Peter as well as John's. Hegesippus and Irenaeus both had lists of presbyters or bishops dating back to Paul and Peter (see Von Campenhausen 1919: 163–8), but only around 190 do we meet with an exertion of episcopal supremacy, making law for the sake of law. This was the decree of Bishop Victor that the Roman date for Easter should be observed by Asiatics in the capital. Those who withstood him – even Bishop Polycrates of Ephesus – were excommunicated; Irenaues, who kept the Roman calendar, felt obliged to remonstrate with Victor's ruling, since the Asiatic date had been observed by the martyr-bishop Polycarp (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.23–5).

Some scholars (e.g. Brent 2011) have denied that there was a monarchical episcopate in Rome before the third century, though none has taken pains to reconcile this view with a letter from Irenaeus to Bishop Victor, which assumes not only that Victor is the sole head of the Roman communion but that Soter and Eleutherius held the same position before him (*Against Heresies* 5.24). Much is taken for granted in Peter Lampe's argument that the Clement who is addressed as a public amanuensis in *The Shepherd of Hermas* is the same Clement who was (wrongly) described as a bishop in the later pontifical lists (Lampe 2003: 400–2). Certainly, we should not refer to these second-century prelates as 'Popes', for this title, which means 'father', was bestowed as an honour on occupants of various sees before it became a regular designation for Roman bishops. So far as is known, it was not given to Callistus, who is alleged by some modern scholars to have transformed the synodical government of the Roman church into a despotism. The evidence is drawn from the *Refutation of all Heresies*, a third-century polemic which accuses him of countenancing heresy and of departing from ancient practice in a number of ways, not least by annulling penalties which the author himself had imposed on members of his congregation. Commonly held to have been the theologian Hippolytus or a disciple, this malcontent has been variously characterized as an antipope, a suffragan and a peripatetic bishop. Allen Brent (1995, 2011) contends that he is speaking for a dispossessed oligarchy which now found itself serving one master for the first time. It can be argued, however, that the conflict is not so much between republican and monarchical forms of government as between constitutional and absolute monarchy; for all its strictures, the *Refutation* never denies that Callistus is the acknowledged president of the Roman church.

Hippolytus is the putative author of the liturgical handbook known as the *Apostolic Tradition*. It is the first text to distinguish between those officers whom the church appoints by regular ordination, and others, such as virgins and confessors, who need no ceremony as they owe their standing to the choice of God (Chadwick and Dix 1992: 18–22). This symbiosis of the institutional and the charismatic is reinforced by the precept that a bishop should have led an exemplary life and been elected by the laity before he is consecrated by the clergy of his own rank. Thanks to his own contumacy, however, Hippolytus was regarded in late antiquity as a forerunner of the schism that resulted from the election of Cornelius in the Decian persecution of 251. The party of Novatian, another aspirant, denounced Cornelius' willingness to readmit lapsed Christians and set up Novatian as an antipope. The laity always had a part to play in such disputes, for, while the initiative in clerical appointments lay with bishops, they were obliged to seek the approval of the flock. If we believe the enemies of Novatian, an unpopular schismatic would resort to desperate measures to retain his popular following,

First, he plied three bishops with strong liquor and induced them to participate in a charade of ordination; then, when he found that priests and congregation still refused any rank but that of presbyter, he introduced new and blasphemous formalities into the eucharistic service:

> Clasping the recipient's hands, he did not let go until he had sworn the following (yes, I shall give his very words):
> 'Swear to me on the body and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ that you will never abandon me and turn to Cornelius'.
>
> *(Eusebius,* Historia Ecclesiastica *6.43.18)*

Cornelius, our one source for this anecdote, insinuates that Novatian led a negligible troupe, yet he also claims to have witnessed an assembly at which 'large numbers' of the laity deserted the pretender (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.43.6). It is difficult to say whether either candidate relied on the support of a particular ethnic group or social category.

The African Church, more vigorous and more Latin than the Roman one at this time, sent delegates who ratified the election of Cornelius. In the eyes of its leader Cyprian, who had struggled to maintain his own position against five dissident presbyters in Carthage, the opponents of a duly elected bishop were as bad as any heretic. In contrast to the successors of Cornelius (who no doubt found it prudent to conciliate the schismatics in their own locality), Cyprian denied that Novatian's clergy had the right to administer any of the sacraments. For the first time we find a great churchman arguing that the difference between a true and a spurious ministry can lie simply in their adherence to different principles of succession. He does not, however, hold the view of later times, that if a man has been validly ordained, we take no further account of his merits or his sins. On the contrary, he avers that those who sacrifice to pagan gods have forfeited their title; that the suffrage of the people is a precondition of episcopal tenure; and even the incumbent must be free of sin if his prayers are to be heard (*Epistles* 42.1, 44.3, 65.2. 67.2, 67.5, cited by Hanson 1985: 142). The Bishop of Carthage saw that enforcement of morality, lay and clerical, required a strong executive, nowhere more so than in the populous churches of North Africa. It was therefore zeal, not jealousy, that led him to put a curb on the bestowal of absolution by confessors, some of whom, with only their incarceration to show as a mark of sanctity, had won an unhealthy following by their readiness to comply with all petitions.

In contrast to Cyprian, Stephen of Rome maintained that if the sacrament were administered in the name of the Holy Trinity, it was valid even when the one who performed it was a schismatic. During the resultant altercation, Stephen of Rome assumed a plenary right of arbitration as the successor of St Peter, and the doctrine of Roman primacy was born. Cyprian's admirers have been apt to regard him as the more conservative of the two disputants, though Allen Brent argues in a recent monograph that Stephen is the one upholding the received, if discordant traditions of the church against an innovative notion of uniformity which is grounded in secular practice (Brent 2010: 296ff.). Certainly, Rome was growing in authority: a few years after Stephen's death, a suit for heresy against Dionysius of Alexandria was referred to his successor (Athanasius, *On the Opinion of Dionysius*). Even the pagan government found it expedient to promote this innovation, entrusting Rome in 271 with the choice of an incumbent to the debated see of Antioch (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 7.30.19). The occasion was the deposition of Paul of Samosata, who refused to quit his house until imperial force was joined to ecclesiastical reprobation. We should not be too quick, however, to draw the inference that the church itself claimed ownership of the house (Cooper 2011: 338–40).

The analogy between secular and ecclesiastical monarchy was strengthened by the accession of Constantine in 312 as the Christian emperor of the west. In the following year, Miltiades, Bishop of Rome, announced that a council under his presidency had acquitted the Bishop of Carthage of the charges laid against him by his enemies, the 'party of Donatus'. The Donatists appealed against this 'transmarine' conspiracy, and Constantine, at their request, convened the Council of Arles in 314 (translated in Edwards 1997: 185–8). This proved to be a synod of the type that has already

become a usual means of settling controversy in the church (Tertullian, *On Modesty* 10.2; Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* [*Life of Constantine*] 1.51). The documents from this and other councils of the period suggest that the principal object was to establish uniformity of discipline in adjacent provinces. The session at Arles set two additional precedents for the ecumenical councils, in that the emperor was present and the Bishop of Rome was not.

Apart from upholding the Roman date for Easter, the prelates at Arles determined that the use of the right form, even by schismatics, was sufficient to constitute a valid baptism. Even the African catholics endorsed this regulation when they saw that members of their own communion who migrated to the Donatists were being rebaptized. Unlike the Novatianists in Italy, the Donatists of Africa raised legions of supporters; some will have been attracted by their claims to stringent purity, others by their resistance to a government that appeared to favour Romans above the native population (see Frend 1952). We have the account of an interested bystander at the riotous election of a future Donatist to the see of Cirta. According to the grammarian Victor, speaking on his oath before a magistrate, the better part of the people had resisted the election of Silvanus on the grounds that he was both a collaborator and a disturber of the peace. The mob, however, demanded him, and a retinue of gladiators and prostitutes escorted him in his triumph. Both these occupations were forbidden by the Council of Arles and many previous rulings, but the citizens could do nothing to restrain them, as they were all shut up in the Great Lodge which the church had set aside for the veneration of its martyrs (Optatus, *Against the Donatists*, Appendix 1.16; Edwards 1997: 165–6). Faced with this secession of the populace, the catholic polemicists confined the right of teaching and of presiding at the liturgy to bishops. The first of them, Optatus of Milevis (376 or 385) seems to doubt that even presbyters can be spokesmen for the church (*De schismate Donatistarum* [*Against the Donatists]* 7.5). His argument that schism is a greater sin than heresy is endorsed in expanded versions of the *Didache* in Syriac, Greek and Latin, the longest of which is known as the *Apostolic Constitutions* (*Didache* 4.3; *Constitutions* 6.1; *Didascalia* 23). Here the threefold ministry is equated with the sacerdotal system of the Old Testament:

> For these [bishops] are your high-priests, as the presbyters are your priests and your present deacons instead of your levites; so also are your readers, your scribes, your porters, your deaconesses, your widows, your virgins, your orphans; but he who is above all these is your High Priest.
>
> *(*Apostolic Constitutions *2.25, tr. Donaldson 1870: 58)*

This is not pure formalism: the writer must have been aware that orphans or not ordained, that vows alone cannot make a virgin and that the altar of Christ is older than his church. Nevertheless, the currency of such writings shows that Christians of the fourth century had redefined the apostolate as a priesthood, not only to emancipate the clergy from the laity but also to justify an alliance with the secular authorities that was frequently invoked against both heresy and schism. Too many modern readers see here nothing but the 'rhetoric of power', yet it was the catholics who urged that the church must be an ark for everyone, even sinners. For Augustine, the catholic champion, power and love were indissoluble in the church because they were both inseparable from divine omnipotence; anyone who takes him for a mere formalist should meditate on his saying that we can have a church without bishops, but not a church without Christ (*Contra Cresconium* [*Against Cresconius*] 2.13).

We have seen that Alexandria and Carthage were prepared to submit intractable disputes to a Roman arbiter; it was quite another thing for him to intervene unasked or to pronounce upon a case that others thought themselves more competent to resolve. The other eastern provinces were incensed by Rome's behaviour after the Council of Nicaea, which was convened by Constantine in 325. Its chief aims were to fix a date for Easter, to reconcile the Melitian schismatics of Alexandria to their bishop Alexander and to judge the orthodoxy of an Alexandrian presbyter called Arius, who refused to acknowledge Christ as God in the same sense as the Father. Attaching more importance to

the last issue than their sovereign, the participants drew up a creed to exclude the position of Arius, and bishops who could not sign it were deposed. Within a few years, they were reconciled to the emperor, who was ready to waive the Nicene definition. This compromise was rejected by Alexander of Alexandria and his successor Athanasius, who seems also to have exacerbated the quarrel with the Melitians (Williams 1986). His methods were tyrannical (see discussion in Chapter 53 of this volume), and after repeated trials on a series of grave indictments, he was banished by Constantius, the heir of Constantine, in 339. The easterners took advantage of his absence to devise new creedal statements which admitted a greater latitude of opinion than the synod of 325.

Were they Arians? Not so, they retorted: 'We are not followers of Arius, for how could we, being bishops, follow a presbyter?' (Jonkers 1954: 57). Were they an ecumenical assembly? They were acting without the westerners, but after all the Bishop of Rome had elected not to be present at Nicaea except through his silent representatives. Rome at this stage seems to have espoused no creed but the one that she professed to have received from the apostles; persuaded by Athanasius that the easterners were now heretics, she became his protector for the next two decades, in contempt of the ancient custom which forbade the interference of one province in affairs already decided by another. An attempt to bring the east and the west together at Serdica in 343 resulted only in the creation of two antagonistic councils (Hess 1958). The dominant voice in the west was that of Hosius of Cordova, yet the principle that he spoke for was the unlimited right of Rome to hear appeals against the decrees of other bishops (Jonkers 1954: 67).

Even when Athanasius returned in triumph to Alexandria, he could not pacify a schism which had erupted in Antioch. When easterners of impeccable orthodoxy favoured a candidate who was not the choice of Rome, the length and intricacy of the subsequent wranglings moved at least one pious layman to throw himself on the unconditional verdict of the Apostolic see:

> I know nothing of Vitalis, I repudiate Melitius, Paulinus is a stranger to me. Anyone who does not gather with you scatters; that is to say, whoever is not of Christ is of Antichrist.
>
> *(Jerome,* Epistle *15.2)*

Jerome, as the proponent of a new asceticism, was no natural friend to priests, and his letters abound in satire on the lazy and vicious clergy of the capital. Neither is it probable that he had discovered higher qualities in Damasus, whose pontificate commenced with a fatal riot and was overshadowed by a number of 'charismatic' figures, Jerome himself not least among them. His testimony reminds us that the call for a Papal monarchy is as likely to proceed from the zealous laity, who aspire to nothing but unity of fellowship, as from the embattled clergy, who have privileges to lose. Naturally, a different form of monarchy was envisaged by the emperor Theodosius I, who in 381 convened a second ecumenical council at Constantinople. The occasion was disastrous, as the first president, Meletius of Antioch, died in office, and when Gregory of Nazianzus, Bishop of Constantinople, took the chair, he was rapidly deposed on a technicality, then avenged himself in exile by inveighing against the futility of councils. Rome agreed, maintaining that the Council had installed the wrong candidate in the see of Antioch. Moreover, as Greenslade (1953: 82) points out, it had insinuated that the heir of Peter owed his primacy to the metropolitan status of his city when it accorded second place to Constantinople as 'New Rome'.

Rome held her ground by annexing the decrees of Sardica to the Nicene canons. Pope Zosimus appealed to them in 418 as proof of his right to scrutinize the verdict of the African episcopate in the case of the dissolute presbyter Apiarius (Merdinger 1997: 111–35). His error was soon exposed by consultation of eastern archives, but no such unanimity between the two halves of Christendom prevailed with regard to the teaching of the British monk Pelagius, who maintained that everyone is as free as Adam to accept or reject the saving grace of God. Zosimus acquitted him of heresy in 417, swayed perhaps by aristocrats in Italy who espoused his high moral standards, and by the Bishop of Jerusalem who pronounced his doctrine sound in 415. The African clergy, guided by Augustine, quickly brought

him to his senses: what, they asked, becomes of infant baptism if we have no doctrine of original sin? No doubt it was the baptismal controversy with the Donatists that commended such an argument to the catholics of Africa, though the precedent had been set by Athanasius when he pointed out that Arians have no right to join in the church's prayers to Christ. In Africa (and indeed in Athanasius), the appeal to common piety is accompanied by the typical indifference of the western church to outsiders, secular or ecclesiastical; it was all to the advantage of the Papacy that the ecumenical spirit was as moribund in Carthage as in Rome.

In general, the prelates of this era carried their people with them. The right of election was jealously cherished by the Roman populace, and fatal riots ensued when support was divided between Ursacius and Damasus in 366 (Ammianus Marcellinus, *Histories* 27.3.11–120). There is evidence that lay suffrage remained the norm elsewhere (Norton 2007), and we read that Cyprian, Ambrose and Augustine were all thrust into office by popular acclamation. After his elevation, the Roman bishop was an autocrat to an army of subalterns and secretaries; at the same time, according to one modern scholar (Sessa 2012), he imitated the arts of mediation that were typically practised by the father of a Roman household. The patriarch was equally secure in Alexandria, where the laity was accustomed to ratify the incumbent's choice of his own lieutenant (who might also be his nephew); by contrast, the advantages of a democratic election were denied to the Bishop of Constantinople, who was always an imperial nominee. A decade after Zosimus, Pope Celestine of Rome became a willing referee in a duel between eastern primates. Alexandria could not but resent the honours that had been conferred upon the new city of Constantinople, and the ancient see sustained a further affront in 428 when its Bishop Cyril learned that a group of monks whom he had disciplined had taken refuge in Constantinople under its patriarch Nestorius. This infringement of the Nicene canons added flame to the theological dispute that had been kindled when Nestorius preached a sermon against the use of the term Theotokos, or 'Mother of God', for Mary. Both combatants wrote to Celestine, who might have been less hostile to Nestorius if the latter had not extended the asylum of his city to Pelagian refugees. The ensuing controversy cannot be said to have run its course before the Fifth Ecumenical Council of 553.

Monks and priests

As is evident from the last few paragraphs, the clergy of the fourth century had to reckon with the powerful ferment of asceticism that had spread to every level of the church. Not that asceticism was a new thing, in Christianity or in the history of religions. Christ sent out his messengers with neither staff nor wallet (and in the second century the scholar Tatian, author of the first harmony of the gospels, formed a community of 'encratites' in Syria, whose object was to liberate the spirit from the flesh by sexual continence and fasting). Invidious comparisons with the Cynics were suggested by contemporaries as well as by Gerd Theissen (1978) and a host of modern followers; we must not forget, however, that Cynics were free itinerants without a creed or social organization, while the encratites, like all Christians, were avowedly the people of a book. Some diffidence with regard to created goods is visible even in the church of Irenaeus, where vegetarianism was practised (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.1.26); a century later, Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, tendentiously proposed that the contemplative and celibate Therapeutae described by Philo were the first Christian ascetics (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 2.17.2). He also held up Origen, the most copious theologian of the third century, as a paragon of Christian self-denial (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.19); though Origen's writings do not wholly corroborate this account, they do undoubtedly recommend the atrophy of the senses and the gradual deliverance of the soul from its gross integument through moral rigour, intellectual discipline and continuous meditation on the scriptures. Origen does not reject the clergy, but he implies that it is possible to be a saint without them; and, notwithstanding the questionable validity of his own orders, he was bold enough to rebuke unfaithful clerics. His posterity after Constantine included both the layman Jerome and the monk Pelagius. The former, as a spiritual gymnast to the rich women of

the capital, wrote fierce tracts against opponents of virginity and fasting; followers of the latter went so far as to imply that only the celibate can possess the kingdom of God (Rees 1991: 71–87).

This cultivation of private spirituality annoyed the ministers more than it compromised the ministry. To accuse a priest or bishop of venality is not to say that we need no priests or bishops, and similar reproaches can be found in the works of great ecclesiastics of the fourth century. Origen is said to have been condemned by synods in Rome and Alexandria, but not to have revenged himself by schism; Pelagius was a heretic, but not an antipope. Neither was there any danger to the balance of society, for the movement shed its lustre only on members of the wealthy and leisured classes. Self-denial would be a ruinous luxury for those who are born to labour and who otherwise cannot command so much as the mere necessities of life. The patrons of these Christian ascetics differed only in religion from the philosophic pagans who were turning private houses into schools of mortification. To another group of Christians, however, even such high-minded worldliness appeared to be inconsistent with the gospel. Around the year 290, a certain Antony, an Egyptian of good family but little education, sold his goods to feed the poor as the Word commanded, and embraced a life of solitary prayer and meditation in the desert (see Chapter 51 of this volume). His visitors were numerous, a few remained, and very soon 'they had made the desert a city' (Athanasius, *Life of Antony* 14). Its denizens – chiefly men, but also women, at least in legend – received the name of *monachoi*, meaning 'those who live alone'.

They came to pray, to chastise the flesh and to wrestle with the daemons. At the same time, in a world where the poor were serfs and the rich were prisoners to their civic obligations, the hermit had won a right to the free disposal of his person that was granted to few inhabitants of the empire. Even a little power beguiles the powerless, and as the imperial tyranny eclipsed all lesser sources of authority, the populace would sometimes turn away from the village headman, the native magistrate and even the local priests to beg a judgement or a miracle from these athletes of the spirit. Brown (1971) and Lane Fox (1997) draw formidable pictures of the most conspicuous type, the Syrian Stylites, who built pillars and lived on top of them to endure the flagellation of the elements. In posthumously written lives we find them stilling heresy, receiving the tributes of ecclesiastics and establishing their own line of succession. For all that, it is not safe to conclude that holy men had supplanted priests in the estimation of the public. Biography was a literary form with its own conventions, and, just as Greek philosophers seldom boasted of the influence that their pupils constantly attributed to them, so the monks and Stylites may have cut a humbler figure in the world than in hagiography. Of course, Susanna Elm (1994: 363–5) is right to extend the same scepticism to the *Life of Antony*, ascribed to Athanasius, in which the monks appear on the side of the episcopate. Antony displays a remarkable knowledge of the errors that have infected Egypt during his seclusion and descends to Alexandria to denounce the Arian party at the height of its success.

If this visit took place at all, it may have been at the invitation of urban monks who supported Athanasius. It is certainly not hard to prove that bishops of strong character had assumed the task of regulating the conduct and opinions of the monks in their vicinity. In 329, the first year of his tenure, Athanasius had visited one of the monasteries of Pachomius, new foundations in which monks, both male and female, were brought together to read the scriptures and engage in manual labour under the supervision of a single abbot. These monasteries were the watchtower of Egyptian orthodoxy throughout the life of Athanasius, and through the *Lausiac History of Palladius* became the pattern for many other 'cenobitic' or communal institutions. Bishops such as Basil of Caesarea in Cappadocia extolled the cenobitic life as more conducive to fraternal love and fruitful labour, though his own experience proved that even fellowship was no guarantee of purity in doctrine (see further, Rousseau 1994: 190–232). Some, known to their judges as Messalians, were said to despise the sacraments, the body and even the God who had created them; the Eustathians, it was feared, had lent an ear to female cries for ordination and equality with men. In 343 the Council of Gangra drew up an inventory of their misdemeanours:

> If any woman professing an ascetic regimen changes her attire and assumes that of a man in place of the customary female covering . . . if any woman abandons her husband and chooses the life of an anchorite, spurning marriage . . . if any woman professing an ascetic regimen cuts off her hair which God vouchsafed to her as a reminder of her subordination, as though to flout the command of subordination, let her be anathema.
>
> *(canons 13, 14 and 17 at Jonkers 1954: 83–4)*

The virgin being a paradigm of Christian submission, it was only to be expected that the most vehement demands upon the obedience of the laity should occur in patriarchal admonitions to this long-established order of the church (Brakke 1995: 57–89). It is fair to remark that curbs were applied to male ascetics also, and that if the admonitions of the clergy had not been welcomed by a majority, they would not have been obeyed. The church as a whole believed that it was following Pauline precept, and if this was interpreted according to the 'classic Weberian model' of coercion, that was not because of a natural or generic opposition between ascetic and institutional Christianity. First of all, many clergy were ascetics and many ascetics favoured institutions. Second, the clergy were so divided in the fourth century that a conflict between a monk and a bishop seldom failed to widen into a controversy between two rival prelates. Third, it was frequently the monks who sought the intervention of the rival bishop, thus confessing that they had no power to withstand the local bishop by themselves. We must beware of quoting private feuds as palmary instances of more widespread phenomena. Thus we hear that Arsenius, an abbot who lived not far from Alexandria, detested Bishop Theophilus; but after his own generation, it seems that everyone detested Bishop Theophilus, and the fact that he was at loggerheads even with the good Arsenius is simply one more proof of his ill dessert. His persecution of the monks of Nitria is perhaps the most infamous episode of his life, but here again we are told that it arose from personal rancour, not from zeal for his episcopate; only when the Nitrians appealed to John Chrysostom in Constantinople did it become an affair of precedence, and by then the monks were almost out of view. Readers of Elizabeth Clark's fine study (1992: 43–84, etc.) will perceive that this was more an affair of monks against monks than of monks against the episcopate: Theophilus made his friends among the so-called Anthropomorphites and his foes among their theological adversaries, the Origenists of Nitria. Athanasius, Cyril and Dioscorus are the other famous occupants of the Alexandrian see between 350 and 450, and none of them found it difficult to rally the monks of Egypt on demand.

Did the ascetic life provide a haven for the charismatic figures whom the rise of the episcopate had driven from the church? Certainly, the desert saints worked miracles and saw visions that were not vouchsafed to clerics. Nevertheless, it was for the willing laity, not for protesting supermen, that Basil and Augustine framed their rules and Epiphanius wrote his handbook of orthodoxy, the *Ancoratus*, in 373 CE. Neither was it impossible for a monk to become a bishop, like Theodoret of Cyrrhus, or for bishops to emulate the feats of monks. The *Life of Epiphanius* is a catalogue of miracles, notwithstanding his long tenure of the episcopate of Salamis in Cyprus (cf. Rapp 2005: 258–60). It reminds us that the bishops of this era yielded to none in their ability to draw a crowd, to generate hagiography and to overawe the mighty; if that is what it means to be charismatic, then it is not the monks but Ambrose, Basil, Chrysostom, Epiphanius and Augustine who are the charismatic spokesmen of their age.

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14
CHRISTIAN REGIONAL DIVERSITY

David G. K. Taylor

Introduction

For much of the world's population, regardless of confession, Christianity is self-evidently a European religion. In some accounts, Christ's birth in the Middle East appears almost to be an aberration, for his gospel was promulgated in Greek, 'a European language', and the formulation and development of Christian doctrine and practice was apparently the work of European – Latin or Greek-speaking – theologians. The expansion of Christianity beyond its European heartlands is usually thought to be the consequence of European missionary activity or colonialism, or a combination of the two, and it is often presumed that this occurred in recent centuries. The agents of this expansion, the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches, are all portrayed as Christian denominations of European origins, and Christianity is often considered to be restricted to these groups. Thus in recent years numerous Christians in the Middle East have been accused of being 'crusaders' and have been martyred for their faith, and Christians in India are frequently accused of being the converts of colonialist Europeans.

The truth however, is far more complex and far more interesting. The first monarch to convert to Christianity was not the Roman emperor Constantine (in 312) but the Armenian king Trdat (Tiridates III, converted in 301). Bardaisan of Edessa, a second-century Christian philosopher, albeit of dubious orthodoxy, could contrast the true Christian philosophy practised in Syria with the barbaric customs of the pagan Gauls, Britons and Germans. By the late fourth century, Christianity was flourishing in Syria, Asia Minor, Armenia, Georgia, Iran, Arabia, Egypt and North Africa, Ethiopia, and South India, and by the seventh century, when Christianity was being re-established in Britain (and had not yet reached large areas of northern Europe), the Christians of Iran had already expanded through Central Asia and consecrated their first monastery in the imperial capital of China.

Little of this, however, will be found in the standard handbooks to early Christianity, regardless of denominational origin, for they nearly all take a Eurocentric view of early Christianity that considers churches located at the periphery of the Roman empire to be historically and theologically marginal. Influential theologians from outlying provinces, such as the Africans Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Cyril, and the Coptic-speaking Athanasius, and those from Asia Minor and the Middle East, such as the Cappadocians Basil the Great and the two Gregories, as well as Irenaeus and Eusebius, have all been given European identities, implicitly or explicitly, although many of them grew up according to local customs, speaking local languages and only subsequently acquired their Greek or Latin through education. To these must be added the major theologians and thinkers who wrote in their native tongues and so have simply been ignored: Ephrem, Aphrahat, Jacob of Serug,

Narsai, Babai, Shenoute, Yovhannes Mandakouni, Eznik of Kolb, and many more. In recent years, this deplorable situation has slowly begun to improve, and some figures (most notably the Syriac poet and theologian Ephrem – see Chapter 59 of this volume) are more frequently mentioned, but there is still much work to be done before it will be generally thought odd that so much of early Christianity should be passed over in silence or given very restricted attention.

In what follows, I have attempted to provide some account of the geographical expansion of Christianity beyond the regions bordering on the Mediterranean, and then to suggest some ways in which these Christian groups and their practices and beliefs challenge our own understanding of Christianity, both ancient and contemporary.

Christian geographical diversity

The early history of the expansion of Christianity is rarely well documented, and this is certainly the case when one turns to examine its progress at the furthest limits of the Roman empire and beyond. In the New Testament Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline epistles we learn of the missionary journeys of the early disciples throughout the Mediterranean lands, and of their rapid successes in the east. Although the numbers of converts to Christianity were no doubt rather limited at first, it is clear that two major missionary centres were quickly established: Antioch, where the followers of Jesus first received the name 'Christians' (Acts 11.26), in the north of ancient Syria (now Antakya, southern Turkey), and Alexandria in Egypt in the south. It is from these bases that missionaries set out to convert much of the ancient world.

Antioch and the east

Syria

According to tradition, the first bishop of Antioch was Peter who remained there for seven years, 33–40 CE, before moving on to Rome where he was martyred. Peter was succeeded by a series of key theologians and church leaders (e.g. Ignatius, Serapion, John Chrysostom) under whom Christianity, over a period of centuries, slowly but steadily spread from the great metropolis into neighbouring cities, towns and countryside. One of the most influential of these cities, and a major missionary centre in its own right, was Edessa (modern Urfa in SE Turkey). The majority language in Edessa was Syriac (a dialect of Aramaic), the language spoken throughout the rural areas of the Middle East, and by many in the 'hellenistic' cities, and the use of this eastern 'lingua franca' gave Edessene missionaries a distinct advantage.

The origins of Christianity in Edessa itself are less than clear, however. A much discussed legendary account of the first conversions in Edessa, the *Doctrina Addai*, tells of the Edessene king, Abgar, receiving reports of Christ's persecution in Jerusalem and offering him sanctuary in his palace in Edessa. Christ writes a gracious reply thanking Abgar but declining his offer – since his duty was to remain in Jerusalem and fulfil his Father's will – and promising to send one of his apostles after his death. In due course Addai arrived, preached the gospel, healed the king of an affliction, and converted many to Christ. There is, however, no historical evidence for the conversion of Abgar (a figure around whom other legends collected; see Figure 14.1), and it is now thought that this text in fact dates to the fourth or early fifth century, and that it was composed by Christians in Edessa at that time to disguise the fact that for many centuries the Orthodox Christians had been only a minority (nicknamed the 'Palutians' after an early bishop, Palut) amongst many competing Christian groups, such as the followers of Marcion, Mani and Bardaisan (all later condemned as heretics). This was certainly still the case in the fourth century, as Ephrem attests, but by then the balance was clearly changing in favour of the Orthodox. Factors that contributed to this growth

were veneration of three local martyrs (Shmona, Gurya and Habbib) from the late third and early fourth century; the arrival of refugees, including Ephrem, from the city of Nisibis (east of Edessa) in 363 when it was ceded by the Romans to the Iranians; Ephrem's own efforts to win people over to orthodoxy through his charitable activities and his hugely influential and popular hymns; the organisational and political skills of tough bishops such as Rabbula (d. 435); the quality of the preachers and theologians produced by the theological school, and the energy and commitment of the great numbers of local monks and ascetics. For centuries to come, Edessa produced some of the greatest theologians of the eastern Christian world (and so left us an enormously rich body of theological literature) and, because it was a major centre for translation (Cyril of Alexandria, d. 444, sent a copy of his *De recte fide* there for immediate translation and distribution), it achieved great influence as a city where east and west could meet and exchange ideas. In the fifth and sixth centuries, Edessa became a centre of resistance to the Christology advocated by the Council of Chalcedon (451), and it was one of its sixth-century bishops, Jacob Baradaeus (d. 578), that preserved the Syrian Orthodox church from extinction through Chalcedonian persecution. (Not surprisingly, many Syrian Christians welcomed the seventh-century Arab Muslim invaders as liberators from the rulers of Constantinople.) Missionaries from Edessa were active both in the villages and towns of western Syria, and in the east in the Iranian empire and in Armenia.

Iranian empire

The Acts of the Apostles (2.9) mentions the presence of 'Parthians, Medes, and Elamites' at the miraculous Pentecost in Jerusalem, and from these small beginnings the church in the Iranian empire had grown by 235 CE to include approximately 20 bishops and 18 dioceses. This may have been the result of conversions amongst the Jews of the western province of Adiabene, or a consequence of Christians crossing international borders in order to seek refuge from Roman persecution,

Figure 14.1 A tenth-century icon (St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai) of King Abgar of Edessa holding the *mandylion*, the image of Christ thought to have been implanted on a cloth when he wiped his face with it; Wikicommons

but their numbers were further boosted by the transportation to Iran in 256 and 260 of Roman citizens from Antioch and its surrounding provinces who had been taken captive by Shah Shapur I during his military campaigns. These included many Christian laypeople and clergy (one of whom was the bishop of Antioch, Demetrius) and they contributed to the growing confidence and organisation of the Iranian church. Unfortunately, Constantine's espousal of Christianity in 312 left Iranian Christians open to the charge that they owed greater allegiance to their co-religionist the Roman Caesar rather than to their lawful Shah. This was quickly exploited by the Zoroastrian clergy, and after a series of short-lived persecutions of Christians in the early decades of the fourth century, there was a prolonged persecution from 340–379 under Shah Shapur II. At least 16,000 Christians are thought to have died, and the martyr acts celebrating their faith and courage achieved a wide circulation not only in the east but throughout Europe. In this time of crisis, the Iranian church managed to produce one of the greatest theologians of early Christianity, Aphrahat 'the Persian sage'. An ascetic and bishop he composed 23 homilies which reflect a profound spirituality and a biblically based theology, whose value and significance is slowly coming to be appreciated in the west. Further short periods of persecution were to occur in the fifth and sixth centuries, but the church in Iran steadily grew in size and confidence. In 424, a local synod asserted the autonomy of the Iranian Catholicos and although the title 'Patriarch of the East' was not formally adopted by the Catholicos until 498, it is clear that the Iranian Christians no longer accepted the authority of the Patriarch of Antioch. This split from their western co-religionists was widened after 489 when the Roman authorities closed the great theological school of Edessa because of its pronounced sympathies for the theology of Theodore of Mopsuestia. (Theodore, whose brilliant writings – the basis of much Syrian biblical exegesis – were formally condemned at the Council of Constantinople in 553, was held responsible for the Christology of his far less gifted pupil Nestorius, who had been condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431.) The former students and staff simply slipped across the border into the Iranian empire and refounded the school in Nisibis. Although their church was not labelled 'Nestorian' by Roman Christians until the seventh century, these events marked a break with the Christian churches of the Roman empire, and whilst theologically driven, it must have had real political advantages. It is worth noting that when Shah Khusrau launched his devastating attack on the Roman empire in 603 he was accompanied by the Patriarch of the East, Sabrisho I, who daily beseeched Christ for an Iranian victory over the Romans.

The Iranian church was one of the most successful missionary churches in history. (It is now usually called the 'Church of the East', and its modern members name themselves Assyrians, or Chaldeans if they belong to the separated church in communion with Rome.) Before their separation from the Syrian Orthodox, they were responsible for planting Christianity in Arabia, and by the fourth century there appear to have been bishoprics in Basra, Kufa, Qatar, and throughout Oman and Yemen. With the rise of Islam, Christianity began to recede in Arabia, but as late as 676 there is known to have been a church synod in the south. Syriac-speaking Christianity reached Kerala in southern India at a very early date. According to traditions preserved in the apocryphal Acts and in local songs, it was first taken there by the Apostle Thomas in 52 CE. In any case, it was firmly established within the next two centuries, and is still flourishing in India today (where at least half of the 27 million Christians have Thomas Christian origins). About 530, the famous traveller Cosmas Indicopleustes (a member of the Iranian church) reports having met bishops in Bombay, Kerala and Ceylon, and other members of his church along the coast of Bangladesh, Thailand and South China. Further north, the Iranian church had major successes amongst the Turks and Huns of Central Asia by the fifth century. Travelling east by the Silk Road and other routes, they reached central China, and, in the early seventh century, they were given permission by the emperor Tai-Tsung to build monasteries and preach throughout his empire. Early Chinese Christian texts incorporated Daoist and Buddhist concepts and imagery, and so provide a remarkable example of early theological inculturation.

Armenia and Georgia

Apostolic origins have also been claimed for Christianity in Armenia – whether Addai who is said to have travelled here from Edessa, or Bartholomew who is a later addition to the tradition – but in any case, Christians were sufficiently numerous in Armenia by *c.* 200 for their reputation to have reached Tertullian in Africa. The presence of numerous theological words of Syriac origin in Armenian and the early use of Syriac biblical texts in the region strongly suggests that some of the earliest missionaries came from Edessa and Mesopotamia, although Greek-speakers from Asia Minor and Syria were also clearly active. (Syriac influence later declined, although in the early period a variety of patristic texts were translated from Syriac, and the activities of monks such as 'Daniel the Syrian' were celebrated.) The turning point for Christianity in Armenia, however, came with the conversion of King Trdat III, and its declaration (between 301 and 314) as being the official state religion. Trdat was converted by Gregory 'the Illuminator', an Armenian noble who had been converted in Cappadocia, and then (*c.* 288) returned to preach the gospel. After 13 years in gaol, he healed Trdat from a bout of insanity and was subsequently freed. In 314 he was consecrated Catholicos of the Armenians in the city of Caesarea, Cappadocia, and so began a steady process of 'hellenisation' of Armenian Christianity. The division of Armenia in 387 into a large region within the Iranian empire and a far smaller area within the Roman empire led to de facto independence for the Armenian church. Soon after, *c.* 400, a former state official turned ascetic named Mashtots created a new alphabet allowing the Armenian language to be written down for the first time. He travelled in the eastern provinces of the Roman empire with students versed in Syriac and Greek, and they produced numerous Armenian translations of theological texts, and the new alphabet plus these translations provided the stimulus for the creation of a rich native literature. Noteworthy amongst the earliest examples of this literature are the *Stromateis* attributed to St Gregory, the homilies of John Mandakouni, the *Refutation of Sects* of Eznik of Kolb, and a series of invaluable chronicles attributed to Agathangelos, Moses Chorenatsi and Elishe amongst others. Although the Armenian church had accepted the first three Ecumenical Councils, they were at war with their Iranian overlords in 451 and so did not attend Chalcedon. At the first Council of Dvin in 506 they rejected the Christological formula of Chalcedon and accepted the Henotikon of the Emperor Zeno, and at the second Council of Dvin in 555 they formally condemned the imperial church and allied themselves with the Syrian Orthodox and other non-Chalcedonian 'monophysites'. (These churches – the Syrian Orthodox and its larger offshoots in India, the Armenian Orthodox, the Coptic, Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox – all survive to the present, and are now known as the 'Oriental Orthodox' churches.)

The Georgians, Caucasian neighbours of the Armenians, began to convert to Christianity in the second and third centuries, and again it was the conversion of their monarch, King Mirian, in either 326 (so church tradition) or 337 (so many historians) that marked the acceleration of the process. Because of its location on the Black Sea, Georgia was influenced by contacts with churches in Armenia (Mashtots, fresh from creating the Armenian alphabet, created a Georgian alphabet in *c.* 410); Iran (Georgian bishops attended a synod in Seleucia in 419); and Constantinople itself (in western Georgia the liturgy was conducted in Greek). Although the Georgians agreed to the condemnation of Chalcedon at the first Council of Dvin in 506, by the end of the sixth century they had begun to assert their independence of the Armenian church, and under Catholicos Kyrion (585–610) they finally returned to communion with Constantinople and the Chalcedonian Orthodox. Georgian monks and scholars were later to play a major role in the history of monasticism throughout the Holy Land and on Mount Sinai.

The Caucasian Albanian kingdom also converted to Christianity in the fourth century, and had its own language and script, of which a single sixth-century palimpsest now survives. It came under growing Armenian influence, and finally disappeared as an independent kingdom and church during the early centuries of Islamic rule.

Alexandria and the south

Egypt

The Coptic Church (its name is ultimately derived from the Greek name for Egypt, *Aigyptos*) traces its origins to the preaching of the evangelist Mark who was traditionally martyred in Alexandria in 68 CE, although it also treasures the memory of the Holy family seeking refuge in Egypt from King Herod. From papyri and other manuscripts it is clear that Christianity was well established in Egypt by the early second century, chiefly amongst the Greek-speaking residents of the cities and large towns, rather than amongst the Egyptian (Coptic) speaking peasants. Given Alexandria's intellectual reputation in the ancient world, it is not surprising that in the late second century the famous Didascalium (or catechetical school) was founded there and was associated with such intellectual giants of the early church as Clement and Origen (or that Egypt also became associated with such rival groups as the gnostics and Manicheans). By the end of the third century, Egypt had about 100 bishoprics, but this number greatly expanded in the following centuries as Christianity expanded rapidly amongst the rural Coptic population. This was probably due to several factors, such as Constantine's edict of toleration in 313; the creation of a simple Coptic alphabet, based on the Greek alphabet, in the mid third century that allowed Egyptian translations of the scriptures to circulate; and above all the popular enthusiasm (amongst both men and women) for asceticism and monasticism – both eremitism, associated with Anthony (see Chapter 51 this work), who was born *c.* 250, and communal cenobitism, founded by Pachomius in *c.* 320. Almost all Egyptian centres of population were within reach of a monastery, and so the monks, through their emphasis on spirituality and profound mysticism, exercised an extraordinary influence on the ordinary people from whom they were themselves drawn. In the fifth century, the Egyptian church produced a series of major theologians who played a major role internationally, namely Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria and Dioscoros, as well as the great monastic writer Shenoute of Atripe. The Copts, particularly in the monasteries, fiercely rejected the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, and this led to a major power struggle with the imperial church and its supporters in Alexandria. The non-Chalcedonian party was finally able to claim victory only with the Arab invasion of Egypt in 641 that severed all Byzantine influence in their country.

Coptic (and Greek) missionaries travelled up the Nile to Nubia (modern Sudan), an ancient civilisation with strong links to Egypt, and by the fifth century there was already a significant Christian presence there. It was from the sixth and seventh centuries, however, that Christian Nubian culture really flourished, and the translation of texts into Nubian and the building of monasteries and churches increased. Native Nubian Christianity survived until the early sixteenth century when the last Christian kingdom passed into Muslim control.

Ethiopia

Now the largest of the Oriental Orthodox churches (with more than 40 million members), the origins of Christianity in Ethiopia date back to the mid fourth century when two Syrian brothers from Tyre, Frumentius and Edesius, were shipwrecked in the Red Sea and enslaved in the ancient Ethiopian kingdom of Aksum. At this time, Aksum was the major political power in the Red Sea region, and under the leadership of its greatest king, Ezana, it not only had substantial African territories but also ruled parts of Southern Arabia. (Over many centuries, Ethiopia had received waves of immigrants from Arabia who had intermarried with the local people and produced a distinctive new nation that drew upon its African and Arabian heritage, and also maintained strong contacts with the Greek-speaking cultures of the Mediterranean. Thus Ezana erected an extraordinary series of obelisks, some more than 100 feet high, engraved with inscriptions in Ethiopic, South Arabian and Greek.) The two Syrian captives became tutors to the royal family and used the opportunity to

preach the gospel. King Ezana converted to Christianity (as can be seen from the new inscriptions he placed on his coins) and sent Frumentius to Alexandria where the great Athanasius consecrated him bishop of Aksum, and sent him back to continue his work. It seems likely that further missionaries followed him for, amongst others, the Ethiopian church venerates the 'nine saints', monks from the Roman empire and often said to be Syrians, who according to tradition came to Ethiopia in the fifth century and founded new monasteries. In 525 the Ethiopian king, Ella Asbeha, invaded Arabia to avenge a massacre of Christians at Najran, and from quotations from the psalms found in his victorious inscriptions it is clear that at least parts of the Bible had been translated into Ethiopic by this time. The Ethiopian church, because of the pervasive and enduring influence from Coptic Egypt, rejected the teachings of the Council of Chalcedon, but little else is known of its early (pre-medieval) history. In part, this is due to a catastrophic invasion by Muslim Somali armies in the first half of the sixteenth century which, although eventually defeated, led to the destruction of innumerable monasteries and churches and the loss of much of Ethiopian literary heritage and historical records.

Christian theological diversity

It is impossible to do justice to the extraordinarily rich theological traditions produced by these numerous churches stretched across the Eurasian landmass, India and Africa, but in what follows I have selected a few limited areas of interest. Readers should not forget, however, that whilst I have concentrated on what is distinctive and original in their theology, these churches also share fully in the textual and theological heritage of early Mediterranean Christianity.

Biblical diversity

Because those churches which flourished in Europe, before expanding elsewhere, agree almost entirely on the identity of the books contained within the Bible (the only minor disagreement concerns the authority of certain texts found in the Greek but not in the Hebrew Old Testament, which Catholics refer to as Deuterocanonical and Protestants as Apocryphal writings), it is often forgotten that for most of the period of the early church the concept of a canon of authoritative scriptural texts, and the listing of those texts, was only slowly developing. Not surprisingly, then, there was much regional variation in the texts which were authorised for reading in church, and some of these alternative canons have been preserved in certain churches until the present. Churches beyond the Greek-speaking cities of the east, or the Latin west, were also quick to translate biblical texts into their own local languages – often on multiple occasions, producing a variety of local versions. These two factors, canon and translation, exercised a profound influence on both the development of dogmatic theology and Christian spirituality.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of an extended biblical canon is to be found in Ethiopia, where there are generally stated to be 81 books in the biblical canon. Rather confusingly, however, these are variously calculated. One canon has 46 Old Testament books and 35 (as opposed to the European 27) New Testament books, whereas another reckons these figures to be 54 and 27 respectively. Amongst the additional Old Testament texts are the books of Enoch and Jubilees – translations of ancient Jewish texts once popular amongst Jews and Christians alike (indeed Enoch is cited in Jude 14–15) but which now survive in their entirety only in Ethiopic. The expanded New Testament canon includes all the books accepted in Europe, plus the 'Shepherd of Hermas'; the four-part 'Sinodos', a collection of prayers and instructions relating to church order which is attributed to Clement of Rome; 'Clement', a collection of texts not known outside of Ethiopia which are said to have been passed to Clement by the Apostle Peter; the two-part 'Book of the Covenant', which is divided into a collection of materials relating to church order and a post-resurrection address by Christ to his disciples; and finally the Ethiopic 'Didascalia'.

Although less dramatic, Syria also possesses a different canon, and it is also significant because it was one of the first regions to produce local Bible versions: the Old Testament was translated into Syriac, possibly by heterodox Jews, although the version was quickly adopted by the local Christians by the end of the second century and came to be known as the Peshitta. It is the local New Testament canon that is particularly of interest, however. In an early fifth-century text, the *Doctrina Addai*, which presents a legendary account of the local origins of Christianity but nevertheless embodies many early traditions, the Apostle Addai instructs his followers about the texts which they may read:

> The Law and the Prophets and the Gospel from which you read every day before the people, and the Epistles of Paul which Simon Cephas sent us from the city of Rome, and the Acts of the Twelve Apostles which John the son of Zebedee sent us from Ephesus – from these writings you shall read in the Churches of the Messiah, and besides them nothing else shall you read.

From this list, it will be noticed that the catholic epistles (both the major epistles James, 1 Peter and 1 John, plus the minor epistles 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Jude) as well as the book of Revelation are missing. By the time the New Testament Peshitta version was produced (by the early fifth century, at the latest), the major catholic epistles had been included, but the minor catholic epistles and Revelation continued to be omitted, and are still not included in the canon of the Church of the East which was geographically (and from the late fifth century doctrinally) isolated in the Iranian empire. In the western Syrian Orthodox church the minor catholic epistles and Revelation were first translated into Syriac in the sixth century, but their usage still remained very limited. (Revelation was translated into Armenian by the fifth century, but only became part of the New Testament canon at the end of the twelfth century, and was not translated into Georgian until the tenth century.) From the writings of fourth-century theologians such as Ephrem, it would appear that in his time the epistle to Philemon was not considered canonical, unlike the third epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (part of the apocryphal Acts of Paul) which was included in his commentary on the Pauline epistles, and which remained very popular in Armenia where it was printed as an appendix to the standard critical edition of the Armenian Bible.

From the citation of the *Doctrina Addai* given above, it will also be noticed that only one 'gospel' is referred to. This is not merely shorthand for the Gospel of Christ preserved in the four books of the Evangelists, but reflects the fact that in much of Syria and Armenia the earliest gospel in circulation in the local languages was the *Diatessaron*, or gospel-harmony, of Tatian (a native of Syria who had been educated in Rome as a student of Justin Martyr, but returned home *c.* 172). The *Diatessaron* became very popular amongst missionaries spreading the Christian faith throughout the east, and so was the obvious choice of gospel text for Ephrem's commentary. Even after the fifth century, when bishops such as Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Rabbula of Edessa sought out and destroyed hundreds of copies in their sees – replacing them with copies of the separate gospels – other copies of the *Diatessaron* remained in use and became the basis of translations into Persian and Arabic which still survive today.

These alternative canons and texts had a profound effect on the development of local theology. To note just one example, in Tatian's *Diatessaron* John the Baptist's diet (cf. Matt. 4:4) is said to consist not of 'locusts and wild honey' but of 'milk and honey'. Not only does this remove the difficulty for some early Christians of the great proto-ascetic eating meat, but by replacing it with the food promised to the children of Israel Tatian has underlined the typological link – found in various early Christian sources – between entry into the promised land and Christian baptism. A small detail became the stimulus for theological reflection. On a larger scale, imagine Christianity without the book of Revelation – whose real authorship has long been debated – which, it could be argued, has encouraged an unhealthy interest in millennialism and an obsession with the eschatological last things, or imagine the theological impact (not to mention the practical advantages for evangelists) of having a single unified gospel without any internal contradictions or discrepancies.

Christian diversity and Judaism

The relationship of nascent and early Christianity to contemporary Judaism is a complex question that still taxes scholarship. In recent years, particularly since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, historians have become increasingly aware of the variety of 'Judaisms' that existed in the early centuries of the common era, and the significance of this for our understanding of the factors that led to the rise and growth of Christianity. Very few, however, have stopped to consider the implications of the existence of a large variety of 'Christianities', each enriched by different legacies from their Jewish forebears. Some of these Jewish traditions and practices are very striking to those who are only familiar with western Christianity, and have led many Europeans either to regard them with contempt or to suggest that they are relics of 'primitive Christianity' (with both the positive and negative connotations that the phrase carries). Again, neither approach is truly satisfactory. Nor should it be forgotten that whilst there are some examples of peaceful Christian co-existence with local Jewish communities in the period and regions being discussed (as perhaps in Georgia), Judaism was more usually, as in the rest of the Christian world, the target of vicious polemic and diatribes. Ever so saintly and gentle a figure as the Syrian Ephrem – often cited as the key representative of 'Semitic Christianity' – reveals a dark side to his character when discussing the Jews.

The origins of Jewish influence on local forms of Christianity are variously explained. Some look to the various semi-legendary accounts of the origins of Christianity in these regions. Just as the apostle Paul is recorded as having travelled and preached to the Jewish communities in the major cities of the Roman Empire, so too many of the early missionaries who travelled beyond the imperial frontiers are said to have been assisted by local Jewish communities. In Syriac legends, the Apostle Addai is said to have made his base in Edessa in the home of a local Jewish merchant, Tobiah, and according to the *Life of St Nino* the first disciples of this evangelist of Georgia, a prophetess from Cappadocia, were eight Jewish women, and the first Christian priest in Georgia was Abiathar, a local Jewish *kohen*. The great Ethiopic *Kebra Nagast*, 'the Glory of the Kings', goes even further and tells how the Queen of Sheba visited King Solomon in Jerusalem and became pregnant with her son Menelik. On their return to Ethiopia, they are said to have carried the Ark of the Covenant with them, and thus to have prepared the ground for the much later evangelisation of their empire.

Whatever the historical value of these stories, the reality and influence of traditions communicated by Jewish converts to Christianity, or by early theological contact between Jewish and Christian communities, is clearly evident. Consider the case of early Syriac Christianity. Here the influence of Jewish exegetical traditions is widespread. At the simplest level this is manifested in the text of Gen. 8:4 in both the Syriac Peshitta and the Jewish Targumim where the name of the mountain upon which Noah's ark came to rest is not Mount Ararat (in eastern Turkey) but Mount Qardu (i.e. Judi Dagh in northern Iraq) – which should perhaps give pause for thought to the numerous pseudo-archaeological expeditions that so regularly go prospecting for the ark on Ararat! Some exegetical traditions appear to have been communicated outside the biblical text. For example, the book of Genesis (4:4) does not state how Cain and Abel knew that only the latter's sacrifice had been accepted by God. Aphrahat 'the Persian Sage', however, writing in the fourth century, and various Jewish writers of different periods, have preserved a tradition that they both saw fire descend from heaven and consume Abel's offering. Of far greater theological significance in Syriac Christianity is the belief that Adam and Eve were clothed in robes of light or robes of glory when in Paradise, and that these were then stripped off as a consequence of the Fall. The origin of this tradition is to be found in Rabbinic exegesis of Gen. 3:21 where a minority opinion holds that the reference is to their pre-expulsion clothing. Furthermore, one Rabbi is reported to have owned a copy of the Torah which read 'garments of light' instead of 'garments of skin/leather' (a difference of one letter in Hebrew). This apparently innocuous textual variant became the basis of an entire soteriological system in Syriac thought. Since humanity had lost its original robes of glory at the Fall, the Son of God became incarnate in order to return them. At his baptism, Christ placed them in the waters

of the Jordan (which according to the *Diatessaron* was immediately covered with a blaze of fire or dazzling light) so that all Christians might put them on again at their own baptism (for in Syriac thought at baptism all Christians share in Christ's original baptism in the Jordan). Although invisible to our eyes here on earth, they will be revealed in their full splendour once their recipients are deemed worthy to enter heaven.

Jewish traditions and even practices are not restricted to the Syrian Christians, but in some instances it is not clear whether these are due to a direct inheritance from Jewish forebears, or are in fact the harmonisation of pre-Christian practices with Old Testament models. The Armenian Christians, for example, continued the practice of offering both cereal and animal sacrifices (bulls, sheep and fowl) to God, particularly at Easter (the Christian alternative to Pesah/Passover), at the great festivals, and in commemoration of the souls of the deceased. Armenian tradition traces this practice back to the injunctions of Gregory the Illuminator who is said to have given permission for sacrifices as a dispensation for the many pagan priests who had been led to Christianity but were concerned about providing for their families if the sacrificial system were to be abolished. Most subsequent Armenian commentators have been keen to emphasise that these sacrifices continue the sacrificial tradition of Abel, Noah and Abraham, but at the same time deny either that they are still following the Old Covenant that has been superseded by the New or that they have been 'corrupted' by Jewish customs. Instead, they are adhering to a biblical practice endorsed by the apostle of Armenia. As a twelfth-century writer (Nerses Shnorhali) put it, 'if other Christian peoples are not accustomed to follow the same usage, that is no reason why any one should abuse ours'.

In Ethiopia, the variety of practices with clear Jewish parallels is even more striking. From the earliest times the Ethiopians have practised male circumcision on the eighth day after birth; they strictly observed the Sabbath, refraining from all work (as well as celebrating on the following day the Christian 'great Sabbath'); they kept many of the rules relating to ritual cleanliness, and did not eat any of the forbidden foods such as hares, camels, fish without fins and scales, or even the sinew of the thigh (Gen. 32:33). There was a particular horror for pork, as is made clear in an Ethiopic saying: 'Pork taints not only him who eats it, but also him who hears about it'. Although some of these practices were played down in official church documents in recent centuries when they became the cause of bitter attacks and criticisms by ignorant European missionaries, they continued to play a central role in Ethiopian Christian life. Particularly fascinating is the central role of replicas of the Ark of the Covenant (Ethiopic *tabot*, plural *tabotat*) in church worship. As was mentioned above, tradition states that the original Ark of the Covenant was stolen from Jerusalem by the Queen of Sheba and taken to Ethiopia where it was treasured throughout the ages and rests now, some say, at Aksum. In every church in Ethiopia, at its very heart, the holy of holies, lay a copy of the original Ark (or copies in wood or stone of the tablets of the law which the original Ark contained) and these *tabotat* were (and are) solemnly led in procession around the church, accompanied by singing and dancing *dabtara* (the Ethiopian equivalent of the Levites who are an essential part of the liturgy, with a particular responsibility for chanting hymns and psalms, but are not ordained). There are clear echoes here of 2 Sam. 6:5, 14–16 where King David and the people of Israel dance and make merry around the Ark. This again raises the difficult issue of whether these practices are due to early Jewish influence or are a consequence of the veneration accorded to the Old Testament by the Ethiopians not only in word – as in European Christianity, which has so often seemed embarrassed by and neglectful of these ancient texts – but also by imitation and adherence.

Theological diversity

Whereas modern scholarship has divided itself into self-contained sub-disciplines, with classically trained scholars focusing on Greek and Latin patristic texts and a small band of 'orientalists' attempting to tackle the rest, in the ancient world there was a constant stream of texts and ideas flowing from one region to another, with, for example, Syrians influencing Greeks, Armenians and Indians, and

Greeks influencing Syrians, Georgians and Ethiopians. Not surprisingly, then, there is a great body of theological literature which is common to many of the different church traditions and literatures, and more which whilst particular to a specific regional literature draws upon common approaches and principles. Nevertheless, a study of early Christian literatures reveals much that is not only intrinsically of great value and aesthetically pleasing, but which challenges our preconceived paradigms of theological discourse. Indeed, some texts challenge our very understanding of orthodoxy – and I am not simply referring to the fact that many of the non-Greek- and Latin-speaking churches were condemned as heterodox by theologians in the west. Take, for example, the second- or third-century Odes of Solomon, which circulated in Syriac and Greek, and which have both attracted and repelled scholars since their rediscovery in the early twentieth century. The oft-quoted nineteenth Ode begins as follows:

> A cup of milk was offered to me,
> and I drank it in the sweetness of the kindness of the Lord.
> The Son is the cup,
> and he who was milked is the Father,
> and she who milked him is the Holy Spirit.
> Because his breasts were full, and it was undesirable that
> his milk should be spilt to no purpose,
> the Holy Spirit opened her bosom,
> and mingled the milk of the two breasts of the Father . . .
> The womb of the Virgin took it,
> and she received conception and gave birth.

Although critics have argued that such lines must have been the product of gnostics, it is now generally accepted that the Odes were produced by Orthodox Syrian Christians, who made creative use of biblical imagery and their own theological traditions. In early Syriac thought, for example, the Holy Spirit was feminine (as here), and there was also clearly an awareness that in several Old Testament passages God was given feminine as well as masculine attributes. The result is a text that would seems radical even to modern theologians and by challenging gendered theological language has much to teach us.

The use of poetry as a vehicle for theological expression is a striking feature of the Odes, and it is in fact characteristic of some of the most powerful examples of early Syriac literature. The most famous Syriac poet is without doubt Ephrem, *c.* 306–373 (about whom more can be read in Chapter 59 of this work). Ephrem organised choirs of women to sing his compositions as a practical means of disseminating Orthodox teachings and combatting heresy, but this was not the main reason for his choice of poetry as the primary vehicle for theology. Ephrem believed that God so far surpassed human comprehension that he could not conceivably be approached or restricted by the philosophical formulae and definitions so beloved of Greek-speaking theologians. Neither could religious truth, by nature dynamic and multi-layered, be fully expressed in prose with its many limitations. Only poetry, with its multivalent images and its ability to communicate differently to each reader on each reading (since readers as well as writers are inspired by the Spirit), was capable of hinting at these realities. It was also the perfect genre for articulating Ephrem's sacramental understanding of creation, according to which God, by placing his symbols and types throughout nature and the Bible, had revealed aspects of the divine to those who approached them with the eye of faith.

In recent years, Ephrem's theology has come to be widely appreciated by western readers, although 100 years ago it was still being rubbished. That same process is only now beginning with the greatest of Coptic writers, Shenoute of Atripe (late fourth to mid fifth century), many of whose works are yet to be fully edited. In the past, he has often been attacked as possessing no Christology, but more recent studies show quite the reverse, that he is profoundly Christ-centred and that in his

theological and spiritual texts he strove to emphasise the reality and glory of Christ's humanity against those who denied it entirely, or sought to ignore it by concentrating exclusively on Christ as *nous* or *logos*, the divine Christ. Intimately involved with this was his encouragement of the faithful to utter the simple prayer 'Jesus' at all significant moments of life, whether in response to joyful or sad events, moments of testing or triumph. Because Ephrem and Shenoute do not conform to European patterns of theological expression, they have both been denigrated for too long, and it is western readers who have been the losers. It is time for Christians world-wide to acknowledge that whilst European Christianity represents one theologically rich offshoot of the early church, it does not have a monopoly in the interpretation of the divine self-revelation. In a time of great change, we may have much to learn from other branches of Christianity that have successfully preserved and taught their faith through long centuries and within diverse cultures.

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15
MONASTICISM

Columba Stewart OSB

Ways of approach

Early monastic Christians are largely inaccessible to us. A few of them wrote or were written about, and some lived in places accessible to modern archaeological excavation. Their greatest monument is the living monastic tradition that claims their insights to be its foundation. The search for early monastic traces is hindered by the apologetics and polemics that have often distorted the study of early Christian monasticism. Until very recently, historical investigations typically were coloured

Figure 15.1 A sixteen-century illustrator's fantasy of early Egyptian monasticism, looking rather more like his native Low Countries than late antique Egypt. From *Solitudo, sive vitae eremicolarum* ('Solitude, or the lives of the hermits'), engraved by Jan and Raphael Sadeler after figures by Maarten de Vos, *c.* 1590

by the religious intentions of writers who sought to vindicate, to criticize or to dismiss monastic traditions. Ascetics were portrayed as heroic non-conformists, as deluded fanatics (most famously by Gibbon), as social misfits, or as docile loyalists. Both Martin Luther's rejection of monastic vows and the Roman defence of them turned on evidence alleged from early monastic texts.

In the nineteenth century, monastic literature began to be subjected to the same critical analysis as the Bible, and scepticism about authorship and reliability of texts abounded (Heussi 1936: 1–10). More recently, the religious agenda of earlier scholarship has yielded to social and cultural analysis since 'asceticism', a category including monastic figures and movements, has become a surprisingly lively subject for intellectual dissection (Wimbush and Valantasis 1995; Stewart 1996, 1997). Monasticism has come to be seen, for example, as an ecclesiastically tamed form of an early charismatic asceticism, as one area of late antique life where women could have some control over their destiny, and as a Christian expression of the desire for a life dedicated to philosophy.

Two major breakthroughs have transformed our view of the early monastic landscape. The first has been an enormous increase in archaeological and literary data. Egyptian papyri have given us insight into the vocabulary and daily life of early monastic men and women (Goehring 1992b). The publication of neglected as well as 'heterodox' texts has provided a broader context for understanding the traditional monastic canon. Literature in ancient Christian languages such as Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Ge'ez (Ethiopic), Georgian and others is taking its place alongside the more familiar Greek and Latin texts. Excavation of monastic sites, especially in Egypt and in the Judean desert of Palestine, has alerted us to the complexities of monastic society and to its interactions with others (e.g. Goehring 1986; Guillaumont *et al.* 1991; Hirschfeld 1992).

The second breakthrough has been one of perspective. What we now call monasticism was part of a diverse social and religious landscape. However, until recently, few historians questioned the traditional focus on those reckoned to be monastic 'founders'. These were almost without exception male, they were often bishops, and the best-known monastic literature was either by or about them. A vaguer category of 'desert fathers' acknowledged a more fluid form of monastic life but perpetuated the assumptions that every form of Christian asceticism could be categorized and that female monasticism was simply an auxiliary enterprise. Much of the terrain lay in shadow or was simply unmapped (Goehring 1992a). Using tools of social history, literary criticism and feminist theory, as well as the scientific discoveries noted earlier, scholars are challenging the traditional understanding of monasticism as a process of lineal descent from the founding (male) figures (Cain 2009; Stewart 2014). Efforts to recover neglected aspects of early monasticism have close ties to recent critiques of traditional categories such as 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy', and of the power structures that determined and enforced them (e.g. Clark 1986; Elm 1994: 1–18; Brakke 1995).

However one approaches the subject, it is clear that 'monasticism' did not emerge from early Christian asceticism as the result of a single cause or a deliberate action. For a variety of theological, social and ecclesiastical reasons, asceticism attained a critical mass and a crucial stage of self-understanding in several different places during the fourth century. To understand the lives of monastic women and men, we must understand their particular circumstances. Local ecclesiastical factors, artistic and literary traditions, geography, language and social conditions all contributed to expressions of Christian faith in monastic life. Monastic cultures are best approached in situ, as they will be here. Even where the inspiration of a particular monastic group came from elsewhere, local conditions coloured and shaped its growth. We must also remember that people and ideas travelled widely in the ancient world (see Chapter 22 of this work). These men and women visited each other, wrote letters, read one another's writings and translated them for the benefit of others.

Amidst the variety of local forms there is a discernible monastic profile. It is recognized in the first place by adherence to a rule or discipline of life, though rarely in this period in the form of a written charter like the later *Rule of Benedict*. Direction came from oral tradition, the common experience of a particular group, a spiritual elder or the growing body of monastic literature. The devotional and ascetic practices of the monastic life cultivated awareness of God while addressing

hindrances or distractions. The normative practices were celibacy, formalized prayer at certain hours of the day and night, memorization of biblical texts for the sake of personal prayer, fasting (both of kind and amount of food), manual labour for sustenance and almsgiving, and consultation with others experienced in the life. Although participation in the Eucharist was presumed, actual practice is not always clear. Groups and communities were normally single-sex, though there are examples of 'double monasteries' where groups of men and women lived in close proximity. Generally there was some form of distinctive dress, differing from common apparel more by sombre colour or poorer quality than by style. Monastic women wore a head covering, which was normally reserved to married women in traditional cultures. With these basic elements, monasticism in each region developed its own spirituality and practices, as well as the structures and vocabulary to support and express them.

Syrian asceticism

Christian monasticism has traditionally been viewed as an Egyptian phenomenon of the fourth century that soon spread to other regions. Its real origins, however, lay in ascetic tendencies and movements that existed from the time of the earliest Christian communities. The most fertile ground for early Christian asceticism was Syria, an inclusive geographical label covering several regions of various ascetic traditions (Stewart 2013). The Syriac language, a Christian dialect of Aramaic, was spoken throughout Mesopotamia and the Levant. Syriac was the literary language of a flourishing Semitic Christian culture centred on the city of Edessa in Mesopotamia. Mediterranean Syria, with large Greek-speaking cities like Antioch, was more directly influenced by the Hellenistic culture of the Roman empire. Between them was Syria's limestone massif, where monasticism flourished in the fifth to seventh centuries. There the culture was mixed Syriac and Greek, and the monasticism of the region reflected the joint heritage.

Syriac Christianity in Mesopotamia was probably Jewish-Christian in origin (Murray 2004: 3–19). More Semitic and biblical than it was Greek and philosophical – though by no means unaffected by Hellenism – this Christian culture viewed ascetic discipline and Christian commitment as inseparable.

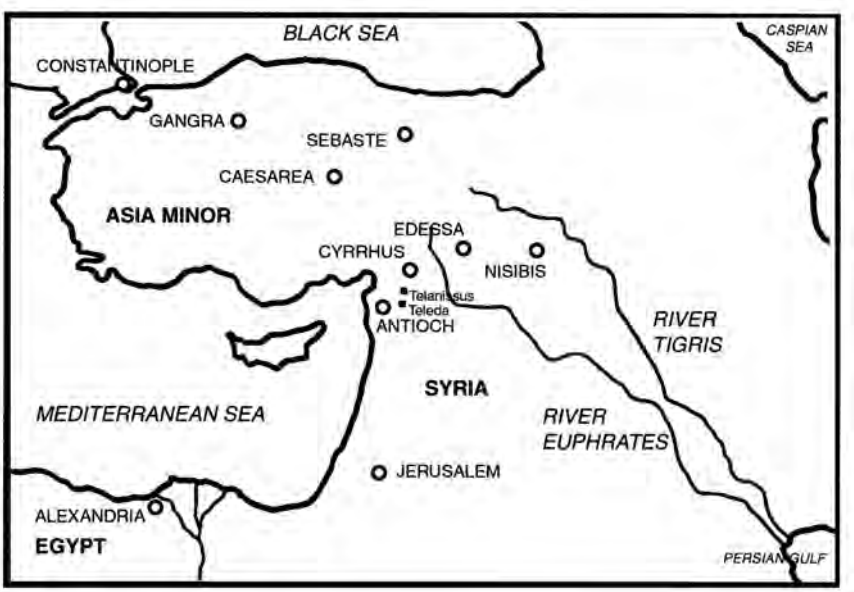

Figure 15.2 Monastic Syria, Cappadocia and Palestine

The ascetic orientation of earliest Syriac Christianity was so strong that before the fourth century celibacy may have been required of those admitted to baptism. Aphrahat (*c.* 270–*c.* 345 CE) and Ephrem of Nisibis (*c.* 306–73 CE), the greatest writers of the early Syriac tradition, placed a vividly eschatological emphasis on leading the 'angelic' life after being clothed with the glory of Christ in baptism. Joined to Christ, the only begotten, the baptized become like him: the term used for 'ascetic', *ihidaya*, can mean 'only begotten', 'single' or 'alone'. Both write of the 'Sons and Daughters of the Covenant' (*bnai/bnat qyama*) who lived as virgins, or celibately after marriage (Brock 1992: 133–9; Griffith 1995).

The teaching of Aphrahat or Ephrem, however, was not separatist or elitist. They worked within church communities that accepted the equation of Christianity with asceticism. Much of Ephrem's poetic hymnody has an explicitly sacramental context, while his prose sermons and biblical commentaries are catechetical. The ascetic pattern for Christianity that they presumed was ultimately hard to sustain as a norm for all, and asceticism became but one expression of baptismal commitment. In time, understandings of monastic life akin to those common in Egypt and Palestine overlaid the earlier, native, ascetic movements in Mesopotamia. Traditional Syriac ascetic vocabulary such as *ihidaya* was reinterpreted to suit those models of monastic life and supplemented by new terms such as *dayraya*, 'monastery-dweller' (Stewart 2014: 215–20). In the early Islamic period, the legend arose that Mar Augen (Eugenios), instructed by monks in Egypt, had founded monasticism in Mesopotamia in the fourth century. Meanwhile, the sayings of the Egyptian monks and the works of writers such as Evagrius Ponticus had become enormously popular and were quickly translated into Syriac.

The earlier Syriac tradition was not entirely lost. Ephrem's hymnody continued to be a staple of the Syriac liturgy and a pattern for later Syriac writers such as Jacob of Serugh. It was both translated and imitated in Greek, becoming the basis for the later Byzantine liturgy through the Syrian Romanos the Melodist (early sixth century). Attitudes and imagery central to early Syrian asceticism deeply influenced the late fourth-century author of the Greek *Macarian Homilies*. Their author is unknown, but the *Homilies* were later attributed to an Egyptian monk, Macarius the Great. The *Homilies*, luminous texts full of vivid imagery and a Spirit-centred theology, illustrate the influence

Figure 15.3 The late fifth-century basilica of Saint Symeon (Qalaat Semaan) built around the stylite's pillar. The boulder in the centre of the photograph is all that remains of the pillar once 12–18 metres tall. Photo Columba Stewart OSB

of Syrian asceticism on the larger church. The *Homilies* circulated widely in various collections. A major text from the Macarian corpus was adapted by the Cappadocian ascetic theologian Gregory of Nyssa for one of his own treatises (Staats 1984), and their influence on later Byzantine spirituality was profound (Plested 2004). The *Homilies* became a focus of the Messalian controversy of the late fourth and early fifth centuries, a controversy explainable at least in part as a collision of Greek and Syriac theological idioms (Stewart 1991).

In western Syria, the fifth-century evidence of the *History of the Monks of Syria* by Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrhus (393–466), and other hagiographical texts depict an astonishing variety of monastic forms of life. There were *cenobia* (communities) as well as native expressions of solitary (anchoritic) monasticism such as stylites (pillar-dwellers) and recluses, who lived in towers or similar structures. The dozens of abandoned cities on the limestone massif of northwestern Syria bear abundant archaeological witness to monastic settlement of all kinds. Although the period of greatest expansion was the sixth century, monastic activity was already lively in the late fourth and early fifth centuries (Peña *et al.* 1975, 1978, 1983). We know from the *Life of Symeon* (*c.* 385–459) that the famous stylite began his monastic career in the company of ascetics at a local shrine before entering the famous cenobium at Teleda. Only later did he climb the pillar at Telanissus that made him famous throughout the Christian world. Theodoret, whose collection of stories about monastic men and women provides a panorama of Syrian monasticism, grew up in close contact with local monks and entered a cenobium when his parents died.

Figure 15.4 Sixth-century CE ex-voto silver plaque depicting St Symeon Stylites threatened by a snake; originally part of the treasure of the church of Ma'arrat an Numan in Syria and now in the Louvre. Photo Wikimedia Commons (note they dispute the copyright claim of Insecula.com)

Monastic Egypt

Even if Egypt was not the fountainhead of all Christian monasticism, it became its imaginative centre. Fourth- and fifth-century Egyptian monastic texts like the *Life of Anthony* and the thousands of *apophthegmata*, the sayings of the monastic elders, gave the early Christian world the themes and figures that reshaped its understanding of asceticism. Foremost among them was the idea of monasticism as a life of withdrawal into the desert. Although only a partial representation even of Egyptian monasticism, the concept of the monastic desert has been reimagined again and again to include life on rocky outcroppings off the Irish coasts, in the silent vastness of Russian forests and amidst the desolation of modern urban centres.

The key to understanding monastic Egypt and its emphasis on the desert is geography. Human society in Egypt clung to the lifeline of the Nile. The river creates a narrow ribbon of green as it runs south to north before diffusing through the lush fields of the Delta and draining into the Mediterranean. In most of Egypt the desert is no farther away than an easy walk. Always in view, the desert begins at exactly the point where human ingenuity or sheer physical power can no longer bring water up from the river.

The evidence we have of much Egyptian monasticism suggests easy access to both solitude and society. We know that there were ascetic Christians in Egyptian cities and towns from at least the third century. Around 270, Anthony the Great (251–356) renounced his inheritance and left his sister in the care of virgins who trained her in their way of life (Elm 1994; Brakke 1995). Anthony then apprenticed himself to a nearby male ascetic. The edge of the village, where Anthony lived before he sought the great desert and where Pachomius (*c.* 292–346) built his monasteries, placed Egyptian ascetics on the border between the realm of the living and the abode of the dead. Some ventured far into the desert seeking a more absolute solitude but most did not: the desert lay at hand when needed, as did the village. Ascetics supported themselves by handicrafts or by working as seasonal

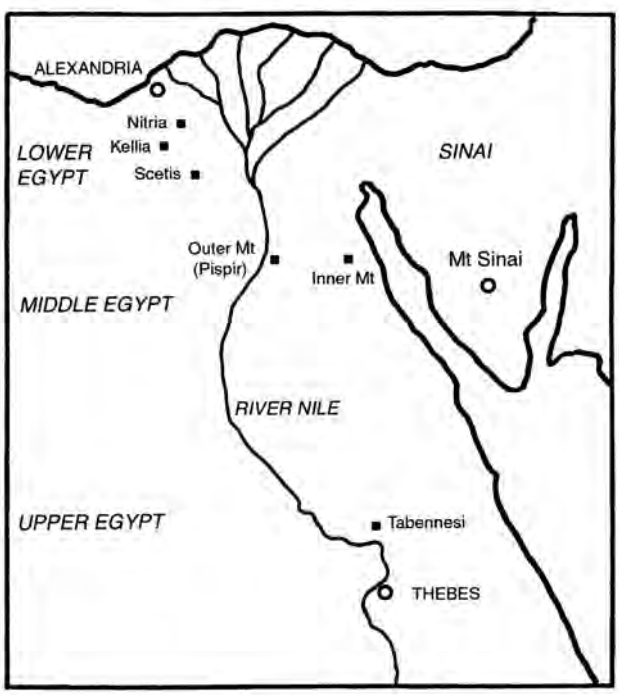

Figure 15.5 Monastic Egypt

labourers, depending on others to buy their services and to sell them food and other necessities. Two idealizing depictions of Egyptian monastic life from the early fifth century, Palladius' *Lausiac History* and the anonymous *History of the Monks in Egypt*, illustrate both the forms ascetic life had assumed and the links between monastic Christians and their secular neighbours.

Anthony was the first Egyptian monk to attract widespread notice (see Chapter 51 of this volume). His fame spread quickly throughout the eastern and western churches, helped greatly by the biography written by Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, just after Anthony's death in 356. The *Life of Anthony* even managed to disturb the ambitious careerist Augustine in Milan, precipitating his conversion. Anthony modelled both the solitary life of the desert and an impressive engagement with others. He was a teacher to monks, an advisor to politicians, a healer of the sick and counsellor of the troubled. Despite Athanasius' portrayal of him as illiterate, he was theologically educated and wrote letters of great spiritual depth (Rubenson 1995).

Anthony's teaching, with its emphasis on analysis of the forces ('demons') resistant to Christian and monastic progress, was the basis for elaboration by his successors, especially Evagrius of Pontus. Discernment of the work of these demonic counter-forces was central to the ascetic life, for in recognition of truth lay the beginnings of freedom. Anthony's psychological subtlety remains impressive. Anthony exemplified a form of monastic life that was also flourishing during his lifetime in Lower Egyptian monastic settlements at Nitria and Scetis. At both sites, monks lived a partial solitude. Groups formed around spiritual elders and met periodically for common prayer and mutual encouragement. These monastic settlements and others like them generated the distinctive literature known as the *apophthegmata* ('sayings') as monastic men and women preserved in writing the teachings of their elders. The sayings were meant to awaken the hearer to new insight, though like parables their meaning is not always immediately apparent. Despite the editing and normalizing involved in the transition to written collections, and the evident influence from philosophical pedagogical texts, the *apophthegmata* preserve an array of Egyptian monastic lifestyles, solitary and communal, male and female, that are both attractive and unsettling (Burton-Christie 1993; Gould 1993).

At the rigorous outpost of Nitria known as Kellia, 'The Cells', the great Egyptian monastic theologian Evagrius Ponticus (d. 399) produced ascetical theology, biblical commentaries and esoteric speculations. Evagrius received a superb theological education in Cappadocia and Constantinople from Gregory of Nazianzus and other teachers. In the imperial capital, he was a rising ecclesiastical star until the personal crisis created by his romantic interest in a married woman drove him from the city. Broken in spirit and in health he found his way to the monastery of Melania and Rufinus in Jerusalem and then with Melania's encouragement went on to Egypt. Like Anthony, Evagrius became famous for his psychological insight, joining his sophisticated theological training to the practical wisdom of the monastic desert.

Evagrius provides the first extant analysis of the passions under the eight headings of gluttony, lust, avarice, anger, sadness, listlessness, vainglory and pride (Stewart 2005). His theology of 'pure' or 'imageless' prayer was to be of great significance for later spirituality (Stewart 2001). The more speculative aspects of Evagrius' teaching and that of others like him particularly devoted to the thought of the brilliant third-century Alexandrian theologian, Origen, created a devastating crisis in Egyptian and Palestinian monasticism at the very end of the fourth century. Scetis and Nitria were split, and some of the most prominent monks fled to Sinai, Gaza, Palestine and Constantinople (Guillaumont 1962; Clark 1992). Despite the Origenist controversy, Evagrius' basic teaching on the ascetical life and on prayer was enormously important for subsequent monastic tradition and his works enjoyed wide circulation both in their original Greek and in translation. His impact was especially great in Syria, and several Syriac translations of his writings still exist. In the west, his disciple John Cassian (*c.* 365–*c.* 430) propagated the basic elements of Evagrius' teaching with a diplomatic silence about their controversial author.

The figure traditionally associated with the origins of cenobitic, or communal, monasticism is Pachomius (*c.* 292–346; see Chapter 52 this volume). The extant literature of Pachomian monasticism

Figure 15.6 Monastery of Deir al Suryani in the desert of Scetis. Photo Columba Stewart OSB

dates from a period of restoration and consolidation, and the founder's biography enshrined the guiding myths of the *Koinonia* (Goehring 1986: 236–40). Born a pagan in Upper (Southern) Egypt, Pachomius was converted to Christianity by the kindness of local Christians who fed him while he was in prison awaiting the draft. After his release, he was baptized and spent some time leading an ascetic life in a village, just as Anthony had done before moving into the desert. Pachomius then resolved to become an anchorite and apprenticed himself to an elder named Palamon; the story of his formation as a hermit is a classic vignette of that form of monastic life. After some years with Palamon, Pachomius discerned a call to develop another form of monastic life at Tabennesi with a more explicit emphasis on community.

The surviving documents suggest that Pachomius' first attempts at creating a *cenobium* (a Latin word from the Greek *koinobion*, 'common life') were disastrous (Veilleux 1980: 427–38). He faced resistance from his brother, who had come to be a monk with him but preferred the anchoritic model. The first members of the new community took advantage of Pachomius' patience and his preference for teaching by example rather than regulation, a pronounced emphasis in the classic method of teaching. Eventually, Pachomius insisted that his followers give up all claims to individual property or preferences, and he established common policies equally applicable to all and susceptible to formulation in oral and written rules. Taking his inspiration from the early church of Jerusalem as described in Acts 2, Pachomius called his group the *Koinonia*, the 'community' or 'fellowship'. The combination of organized communal life and strong leadership by the superior, especially in a teaching role, proved attractive. Pachomius' model seems to have spread quickly as both male and female communities formed under his guidance. His movement could not have been isolated from other efforts to find ascetical perfection, though the exact links between Pachomian monasticism and, e.g., Gnostic groups, remain disputed (Veilleux 1986).

The sister whom Anthony left in the care of virgins later became a spiritual guide for other women. Pachomius' sister Mary was the superior of one of the female communities of the *Koinonia*. Neither emerges in her own right from the scanty references in this literature directed mainly toward men. Indeed, we are never even told the name of Anthony's sister. We know there were groups of ascetic women in the cities. Palladius included stories about a number of women in his ascetical compendium, the *Lausiac History*, and a handful of women are among the revered elders of the surviving

apophthegmata (Elm 1994: 253–82, 311–30). Among them is Amma Syncletica, whose sayings are extracted from a compelling but mysterious text composed sometime in the early fifth century. The anonymous *Life and Regimen of Blessed Syncletica* (see quotation below) bears several literary parallels with the *Life of Anthony*, and contains clear allusions to Evagrian spiritual theology. Syncletica is presented as the beautiful daughter of a prominent Alexandrian family who resolved to live as an ascetic in a family tomb outside of the city. She collected disciples and formed the community to whom she delivers the instructions found in her *Life*. Her teaching on poverty and chastity shows a distinctive approach to these conventional themes and possibly allows a glimpse into how women interpreted and applied fundamental ascetic motifs (Forman 1993; Bongie 1997).

> When her parents died, she was inspired by a divine impulse to even more. She left her parents' home, taking her sister – who was blind – with her. They went out to a tomb that belonged to one of her relatives some distance from the city. She sold all the property that had been left to her, distributed the proceeds to the poor, called for one of the priests, and cut off her own hair. Thus she laid aside all adornment, for it is the custom among women to refer to hair as adornment. It was symbolic of her soul's becoming frugal and pure. Then, for the first time, she was worthy of the title 'virgin'. When she had distributed all of her property to the poor, she said: 'I have been made worthy of a great title: since I have nothing, what of significance can I offer in return to the one who has given it to me? For in external affairs, people throw away everything they have to gain ephemeral honour: how much more should I, made worthy of such a gift, not hand over even my body along with these things esteemed as possessions? For the Lord's is the earth and its fullness'. Clothing herself in humility by these words, she undertook the solitary life.
>
> *(*Life and Regimen of the Blessed Syncletica *11–12)*

Monasticism in Egypt, riven already by the Origenist controversy, was further divided by the theological controversies of the fifth century that would fray and then break the ecclesiastical ties between Alexandria and Constantinople. Monasticism became more definitively Coptic and developed along new lines, as evident in the life and work of Shenoute of Atripe (348–465!), a monastic leader in Upper Egypt whose White Monastery rose in importance as the Pachomian *Koinonia* declined. Almost entirely absent in traditional accounts of monastic history, Shenoute has re-emerged in recent scholarship as a figure of fascination and some consternation for his fiery prophetic writings and insistence on the strictest discipline in the communities under his control (Emmel 2004; Schroeder 2007; Layton 2014).

International monasticism in Palestine

When imperial patronage of Christianity began under Constantine in the early fourth century, Palestine became a centre of pilgrimage and ecclesiastical development. The identification of holy places led to massive building projects and an influx of visitors, clergy and monastic men and women. Many came as pilgrims and stayed as monks and nuns.

Monasticism in Byzantine Palestine had several inter-related elements. On the coast in Gaza both hermits and monastic communities could be found beginning in the fourth century, although their greatest fame would come two centuries later (Neyt and Angelis-Noah 1997: 13–22; Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky 2004). There were monastic communities associated with urban holy places, most notably in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Closely linked to these as sites of pilgrimage were the monasteries of the Jordan Plain near Jericho. Most gripping to the imagination was the monasticism of the hilly Judean desert east of Jerusalem. The dramatic difference in rainfall between the Holy City

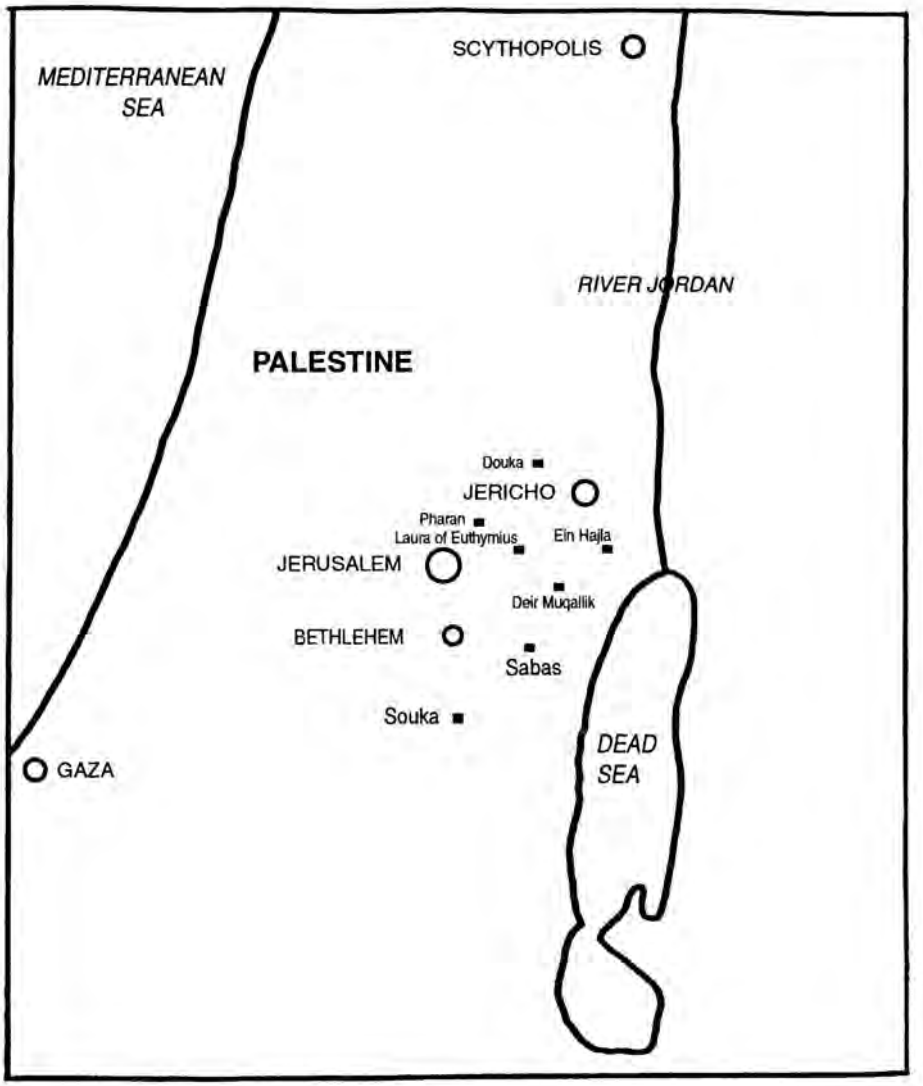

Figure 15.7 Monastic Palestine

atop the rocky spine of central Palestine, and the Judean hills and valleys plunging toward the Dead Sea, created a unique ambience for monastic life. Though the desert was visible from the Mount of Olives, the peculiar geography of Palestine – not unlike Egypt in effect, though not in form – made the monasticism of the desert environmentally and psychologically quite distinct from that of the towns or the river plain (Hirschfeld 1992: 6–10).

We know that there were Greek communities in both Jerusalem and Bethlehem in the late fourth century. Writing in the early 380s, the indefatigable Spanish pilgrim Egeria, herself a nun, mentions both male and female monastic residents in both places. It would seem from Egeria's account that she found monks at virtually every pilgrimage site she visited from Sinai to the Galilee. The young John Cassian came to Bethlehem in the early 380s and became a monk in a Greek-speaking *cenobium* there. There were also non-Greek monasteries in Jerusalem as Armenians, Copts, Georgians and others established churches and hostels for their own pilgrims. Monasteries grew up around these establishments to care for the pilgrims who frequented them.

Among the famous Latin Christians who made their way to the Holy Land in the 380s were Melania and Rufinus, who established a community remarkable for its learning on the Mount of Olives across from Jerusalem (Clark 1992). Both were scholars and noted Origenists, and it was to them that the distraught Evagrius came after fleeing Constantinople. In Bethlehem, Jerome and Paula lived next to the Cave of the Nativity, and Jerome undertook his massive project of translating the Bible from its original Hebrew and Greek into Latin (Cain 2009). In each case, the women financed the enterprise and underwrote the literary projects of their male colleagues. Both Rufinus and Jerome translated Greek monastic texts, considerably enriching Latin monastic literature at a crucial time.

The monasticism of the Jordan plain developed in an area attractive to pilgrims eager to visit the famous biblical town of Jericho and to bathe in the waters of the river where Jesus himself was baptized. Indeed, the first mention of monks in Palestine is of hermits at 'Ain Hajla, a spring near the Jordan just north of the Dead Sea. The site was known as Calamon, 'reed-bed', from the vegetation around the spring. This and nearby sites were extensively developed in the fifth and sixth centuries during the principal growth period for Judean monasticism. A modern archaeological survey counted more than 25 sites in the small area (25 km^2) between Jericho and the river (Hirschfeld 1992).

The Judean desert south of Jericho is a compact region of stark hills cut by deep canyons. The landscape created more monastic living space than a flat area of comparable size could provide. The canyons provided both natural caves for monastic dwellings and a measure of privacy. Consequently, large numbers of monastic settlements were possible in a narrow strip of land ranging about 60 km from north to south and 20 km from west to east. Archaeologists have identified at least 45 monastic sites tucked away in this rugged terrain, some of considerable size (Hirschfeld 1992). Survival was possible by locating monasteries near springs and/or collecting winter rainfall into cisterns through catchment techniques. The landscape helps to explain one of the ascetic practices characteristic of this tradition, that of Lenten wandering in the desert. Because Lent came at the end of the rainy season, a time of natural provision of both water and of edible plants, one could live off the land in a manner impossible during the rest of the year.

As far as we know, the monasticism of the Judean desert was exclusively male. The major figures associated with its three principal phases all came from Asia Minor on pilgrimage to the holy places and never left. The first of them, Chariton, survived persecution in Lycaonia (southern Asia Minor) and came to Jerusalem in the early fourth century. He staked out a series of monastic settlements from the north to the south of the Judean desert, beginning around 330 at Pharan ('Ain Fara), east of Jericho. A few years later he moved to Douka, above Jericho on the traditional Mount of Temptation, and finally ended up at Souka (Khirbet Khareitun), near Bethlehem. It was Chariton who developed the distinctive form of Judean desert monasticism, a semi-eremitic way of life known as the *laura*. A *laura* consisted of a central complex (church, refectory, etc.) and individual monastic cells arrayed at some distance from the centre. The cells were often dotted along a canyon ridge, perhaps explaining the name: one meaning of the Greek word *laura* is 'lane'. The monks spent the weekdays alone in their cells and assembled at the main complex for Sunday liturgy and a common meal.

The history of the next two phases of Judean desert monasticism is known to us from the extraordinary series of monastic biographies written by Cyril (*c.* 525–558?), a native of Scythopolis (Beth-Shean) who came to Jerusalem as a monk in the 540s (Flusin 1983; Binns 1994). Cyril lived in monasteries associated with Euthymius (377–473) and Sabas (439–532), whose lives he would write. Both Jerusalem and the desert were highly politicized throughout this period and beyond, and Cyril's accounts of Euthymius and Sabas are dominated by ecclesiastical and doctrinal controversies.

Euthymius was a priest from Armenia who came to Palestine already a monk. He entered the *laura* at Pharan which had been founded some 70 years earlier by Chariton, and there he met his future colleague Theoctistus, with whom he established the first *cenobium* in the Judaean desert (Deir Muqallik) around 411. Euthymius established the principle that monks should ordinarily begin their monastic life in a *cenobium* and then proceed to the *laura*. The *laura* he himself founded (Khan al-Ahmar) was converted into a *cenobium* shortly after his death, a decision credited to Euthymius

Figure 15.8 Wadi Chariton in Palestine; looking north from the site of Souka, the laura of Chariton. The Herodion is in the centre. Photo Columba Stewart OSB

himself via an apparition. Euthymius was spiritual guide to the Empress Eudokia (d. 460), the great builder of fifth-century Jerusalem, and converted her to the Chalcedonian view of Christology. He also began Christian pastoral outreach to the nomadic Arab tribes of the desert.

Expansion and development continued throughout the fifth and sixth centuries, particularly under Sabas' leadership, though the monasteries were terribly divided by a rekindling of the Origenist controversy in the sixth century. The Persian invasion of 614, followed in less than 25 years by the conquest of Palestine by the Arab armies, shrank the monastic population and began the process of abandonment of the monastic sites in the desert.

Cappadocian domestic and communal asceticism

Paul the apostle, himself a native of Tarsus on the southern coast of Asia Minor, visited Cappadocia in central Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) on his third missionary journey. The church in Cappadocia was strongly influenced by Syrian Christianity through Armenia, which lay just to the east. Apocryphal gospels and acts, with their emphasis on asceticism and especially on virginity and celibacy, circulated widely. Ascetic communities were forming in the first half of the fourth century under the guidance of Eustathius, bishop of Sebaste in Armenia. The so-called *Macarian Homilies* circulated in Cappadocia shortly after their composition in the 370s. Cappadocia was home to three of the greatest theologians of the early Christian world. Two were brothers, Basil, bishop of Caesarea

(*c.* 330–379) and Gregory, bishop of Nyssa (*c.* 330–*c.* 395), and the third, another Gregory, known by his hometown of Nazianzus (329–389), was a close friend. All had received a fine education, were sympathetic to the Alexandrian theological tradition exemplified by Origen, and became major figures in the development of post-Nicene Trinitarian orthodoxy. All three were also inclined toward asceticism, which was a strong theme in Origen's writings and of course increasingly prominent in the fourth century. Basil became involved in the guidance of monastic communities, and Gregory of Nyssa was a mystical and ascetical writer of great depth. Cappadocia was thus a confluence of eastern ascetic currents and Hellenistic theology.

In the family of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, the women were the ascetic leaders (Elm 1994: 78–105; Rousseau 1994: 61–76; Silvas 2008). Their sister, known as Macrina the Younger, persuaded their mother Emmelia to establish communal ascetic life on a family estate near Caesarea in the late 350s. Macrina had been converted to asceticism sometime earlier when the family still lived in Caesarea, perhaps through acquaintance with texts such as the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. Her brother, Naucratius, lived on the estate as a semi-hermit. It was to this home environment that Basil returned after completion of his studies and a brief career in teaching. Newly baptized, Basil resolved to live as an ascetic across the river from the family villa, and there he wrote his first ascetic treatise, the *Moral Rules*.

Basil was not destined for retirement and soon went back to Caesarea to work for the bishop whom he later succeeded. Meanwhile, the family ascetic community grew under Macrina's leadership, attracting new members and developing along more structured lines. By the time of her death in 380, the domestic asceticism led by family and servants in the 350s had become a monastery for both women and men. The description left to us in Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Macrina*, written immediately after her death, shows us Cappadocian monasticism led by women.

The family were not the only influence on Basil's asceticism. After his baptism he visited Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestine and Egypt, though we know little about his tour beyond the fact of it. More significant was his encounter in eastern Asia Minor with Eustathius (*c.* 300–*c.* 370). Eustathius was a controversial figure trying to negotiate the tension between the sectarian tendencies of asceticism and the imperative of ecclesial integration. A native of Sebaste in Armenia, where his father was bishop, he studied in Alexandria under the great presbyter and teacher Arius. Consequently he had hesitations about the Council of Nicaea, a fact that would later cause problems with Basil. The ascetic communities organized by Eustathius may have been influenced by the developments in Egypt, but were surely also based on local traditions shaped by Syrian asceticism (Gribomont 1984: 3–116).

Many bishops were troubled by the behaviour of ascetic groups, as we learn from the canons of a council held at Gangra sometime in the 340s or 350s that sought to define correct asceticism. Asceticism was not new, but as it became more prominent and institutionalized, it began to seem a social and financial threat to other ecclesiastical institutions. Eustathius set about toning down ascetic non-conformity, and after his own election as bishop of Sebaste in 357, he worked to reconcile ascetic communities with the institutional church by having them provide charitable services such as a large hospice in Sebaste. This is just what Basil would later do as bishop in Caesarea.

Basil's interest in ecclesiastical order and organization made him sensitive to issues of accountability and nomenclature. His *Asketikon* (the name was given to various editions of a commentary on basic points of ascetic spirituality and governance) established a teaching role for the bishop and outlined a clear sense of how ascetic communities fit into the life of the larger church (Rousseau 1994: 190–228; Silvas 2005). Basil took pains to minimize distinctions between the Christian and monastic vocations. He avoided specifically monastic terminology, preferring euphemisms like 'the devout life'. The spirituality is explicitly biblical, based on living out the two commandments of love of God and neighbour. The tone and discipline are moderate. As one reads through the first few sections of the *Long Rules*, the principal component of the *Asketikon*, Basil's effort to maintain a distinctive identity for the communities while avoiding separatist, sectarian rhetoric is notable even if not always successful. In different editions and sections of the *Asketikon* the reader sees the evolution of structures and policies; over time, the communities inevitably became increasingly 'monastic' in identity.

The work of Macrina and Basil illustrates how asceticism moved to centre stage in one region of the Christian world. Assessments of this development vary. Some see it as a regrettable co-opting of asceticism by church leaders, while others note the significance of establishing a clear place for monasticism in the larger church. Basil's work has been of great importance for the development of Byzantine monasticism, and Rufinus of Aquileia translated an early edition of the *Asketikon* into Latin. A copy of that translation found its way into the hands of Benedict of Nursia, who mentions Basil by name in the closing lines of his *Rule*.

Italian asceticism and monasticism

In fourth-century Italy, asceticism was most apparent among propertied widows and the young women they and ascetically minded bishops encouraged to choose a life of consecrated virginity (Jenal 1995). An early adherent to ascetic ideals in the 350s was Marcella, who was inspired by a Latin translation of the *Life of Anthony* and by her conversations in the 370s with the exiled Nicene bishop of Alexandria, Peter. Paula and Melania were Roman matrons who eventually founded monasteries in Palestine, where their advanced notions of asceticism had a warmer reception than in the

Figure 15.9 Latin monasticism

more conventional circles of Rome. These were educated women who enjoyed the intellectual and spiritual companionship of like-minded men, to the fascination and distress of their peers.

Asceticism could be a disruptive social force anywhere it became popular, but the controversy was particularly fierce in Italy. Early in his episcopate in Milan, Ambrose (*c.* 339–397; bishop 374–397; see Chapter 57 of this volume) urged the young girls of the city to follow inclinations to consecrated virginity even over their parents' objections. His own sister, Marcellina, had taken a formal vow of virginity in Rome some 20 years before, receiving the virgin's veil from the Pope at the Christmas liturgy. Ambrose hoped to introduce such Roman ideas (and the public veiling ceremonies that accompanied them) to Milan, where asceticism previously had a low profile (Brown 1988: 341–65; McLynn 1994: 60–8).

Shortly after Ambrose's campaign began in Milan, Jerome spent a few years in Rome arguing the case for asceticism, and especially virginity. His opponents were people such as Helvidius, an advocate for traditional family life. Jerome's famous *Letter 22 to Eustochium* (*c.* 384) was a strident and even inflammatory exhortation to Paula's daughter, encouraging her to stand firm in her resolve to live as virgin and ascetic. Although Jerome managed to trounce Helvidius in argument, his typically caustic and occasionally vicious manner was offensive to many and eroded his popularity. The death of Jerome's patron, Pope Damasus, in late 384, and a rumour campaign about his relationship with Paula, led them to leave Italy the following year for Bethlehem.

Both Ambrose and Jerome related their arguments in favour of virginity to a theological anthropology linking sexuality to the fallen state of humankind (Hunter 2007). They saw sexual renunciation, and especially virginity, as a way to reclaim the intended human condition. Both of them were strong advocates of the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary, mother of Jesus. They extended their argument to include a celibate clergy. The consecrated virgins of Milan and Rome were the forerunners; the ordained men were to follow their example.

The evidence for male asceticism in Italy is less abundant than for the women. Ambrose, however, in a letter to the church of Vercelli (*Epistle* 63), a town not far from Milan, praised the example of their former bishop, Eusebius (bishop 334–371), who had lived 'like a monk'. Eusebius had spent time in Egypt during a period of exile from 355–363 and doubtless encountered monasticism there. At Vercelli he established a monastery for himself and his clergy. Augustine writes in the *Confessions* of the monastery of men at Milan under Ambrose's care and of encounters a friend had with ascetics who were reading the *Life of Anthony*.

The significant figure for Italian monasticism of the early fifth century is Paulinus (355–431), later bishop of Nola. Born in Bordeaux, son of a Roman senator, himself a provincial governor, Paulinus knew Ambrose and met Martin of Tours when he returned to Gaul. He married a wealthy Spanish woman, Theresia, but after the death of their only child in 389 they left Gaul and went to Spain where they soon began to sell off their property and to pursue their shared interest in the ascetic life. After Paulinus was ordained a priest they returned to Italy, settling south of Rome in Nola where they established a monastery for men and women. Probably after the death of Theresia, around 410, he was ordained bishop of Nola. Paulinus' descriptions of their monastic life and archaeological excavation in Nola suggest a monastery in which men lived on one side of the hallway and women on the other, with paintings of holy men and women of the Bible marking the respective sides. There was a church and a guesthouse with three sets of rooms for the wealthy, the poor and the sick. The members of the community wore distinctive dress, with trimmed hair for the men and veils for the women (Lienhard 1977).

The tradition of wealthy Roman female ascetics continued with the richest of them all, Melania the Younger (385–439; Clark 1984). Named for her famous grandmother, she had ascetic leanings but was compelled to marry. After the death of her two children, she persuaded her husband Pinian to live celibately. Leaving Rome, they began to dispose of their massive wealth, a process lovingly chronicled in her *Life*. After spending some time on their estates in Sicily, they visited Augustine in North Africa and saw monks in Egypt. Along the way, they made a point of meeting famous ascetics and tried to unload their gold wherever they could; one monk threw it in the Nile. They settled in

Jerusalem, where Melania built a cell and eventually a monastery on the Mount of Olives where she remained the dominant figure (though not the official superior) until her death.

Gaul: native and imported monastic cultures

Christianity came to Gaul, a region including modern France, the Low Countries and parts of Germany, at least by the early second century CE. At that time there was a persecuted Greek-speaking community of Christian settlers in Lyons that was soon to be led by one of the greatest early theologians, Irenaeus of Lyons (*c.* 130–200). The story of monasticism in Gaul, however, pertains to the Latin church which developed in the region throughout the third and fourth centuries.

There were two major centres from which monasticism spread, though of course there were ascetic individuals and groups in many areas. We can identify a first wave of monastic influence moving east from Tours in the Aquitaine, inspired by Martin (*c.* 316–397) and his successors. A second movement spread north from the island monastery of Lérins off the southern coast of Gaul, producing numerous church leaders and a number of monastic rules. At the close of our period, a widely travelled and wise monk named John Cassian (*c.* 365–*c.* 430), to whom I will return later, wrote up his monastic experiences in a compendium of traditional teaching and creative analysis that would be of tremendous importance for later western monasticism.

Martin's asceticism was decidedly western. His own teaching, as conveyed by his biographer, Sulpitius Severus (*c.* 360–*c.* 430), contains no reference to Egyptian or other eastern Christian models. According to Sulpitius, it was only after Martin's death that members of his circle visited the monasteries of the Orient. Martin was born in Pannonia (modern Austria and Hungary) into a military family and was raised in Italy not far from Milan. Destined from birth to a career in the army, he became a soldier at age 15. He was baptized a few years later, after his famous encounter with a beggar who later appeared to him in a vision as Christ clothed in the cloak Martin had sliced in two and shared. Sulpitius indicates a brief interval between baptism and leaving the army to pursue the ascetic life; history suggests a much longer period, as much as 30 years.

Martin had probably encountered monasticism in northern Italy like that of his older contemporary, Eusebius of Vercelli. It is also possible that in the course of his army service Martin visited monasteries in the east as Eusebius did during a period of exile from 355–363. After leaving the army, he lived in Poitiers with its bishop Hilary until the latter was expelled from his see because of his Nicene views. Martin then went to Milan and lived as a hermit. Expelled by an Arian bishop, Martin lived as a hermit on the island of Gallinaria, off the northwestern Italian coast near Genoa. When it became possible to return to Gaul, Martin settled near Poitiers in a place named Ligugé. Again he lived as a hermit but disciples came and settled around him and he established the kind of monasticism for which he became known: relatively unstructured, semi-eremitic and centred upon a teacher. After being named bishop of Tours in 371, Martin established a similar retreat at Marmoutier. The community that formed there was more structured than at Ligugé, though the basic emphasis on contemplation and obedience to the master was the same. Marmoutier became Martin's base for vigorous missionary work of fighting demons, converting pagans, building churches and monasteries on the sites of pagan shrines, and raising the dead (a point on which Sulpitius compares Martin to Egyptian anchorites and cenobites, to the disadvantage of the latter).

The second major monastic movement in Gaul was in Provence, radiating north from the small, rocky island of Lérins, which is located east of Marseilles. There, Honoratus (d. 430), a Gaul who had visited Palestine and Egypt after his conversion to asceticism, organized the existing anchorites into a *cenobium* and provided them with a written monastic rule around the year 400 (Pricoco 1978; Vogüé 1982). In doing so, Honoratus established a monastic centre that would have great influence along the Mediterranean coast to the west and north along the Rhone valley. Lérins has been called the cradle of the episcopate for southern Gaul since many of its monks became bishops, fostering monastic foundations in their dioceses.

Honoratus and Sulpitius were contemporaries, but the monasticism of Lérins owed much more to Egyptian models than did Martin's. Both Honoratus' travels and the position of Lérins near trade routes explain the look to the east. The first Lérinian rule (known as the *Rule of the Four Fathers* from its format as a conversation among four monks) shows Egyptian influence in its strong emphasis on obedience to the superior and a daily fast until the ninth hour, i.e. 3 pm. The *horarium* allowed for three hours of personal prayer at the beginning of the day followed by work until the meal. The series of Lérinian texts shows the development of the Latin literary genre of the monastic rule (*regula*), though there is no sense that a rule was an unalterable text: such a notion would arise only in the ninth-century canonization of the *Rule of Benedict*.

In the early fifth century, during Honoratus' tenure at Lérins, a monk named John Cassian arrived in Marseilles. A native of the bilingual (Latin and Greek) region of Scythia Minor, Cassian became a monk in Bethlehem in the Greek *cenobium* known to have existed before Jerome established his community. Inspired by tales of monastic Egypt, Cassian and his friend Germanus left their monastery in order to visit communities and individuals in Lower Egypt. They settled at Scetis for several years, leaving Egypt most likely because of the Origenist controversy of 399. After a few years in Constantinople under the patronage of the monk and bishop John Chrysostom, Cassian probably lived in Rome before moving on to Marseilles (then known as Massilia) in the 410s. During the last two decades of his life, he wrote his influential *Institutes* and *Conferences* (Stewart 1998; Goodrich 2007).

Cassian's own life is the key to appreciating his contribution to monastic literature. Firmly persuaded of the value of Egyptian monastic spirituality and customs for the emerging monasticism of the west, he summarized his experiences in monasteries of the east and provided a creative synthesis and practical application of particularly Evagrian monastic thought. Cassian claimed to bring the elders of the Egyptian desert to his Latin readership. He admitted to adjusting the Egyptian traditions according to his own idea of what monks in Gaul needed to know, hoping to influence their monastic development along lines quite different from those of Martin and his followers. In that he succeeded, perhaps beyond his dreams, for Benedict of Nursia enshrined Cassian's writings among the texts named in his *Rule*.

> When all our love, all desire, all effort, all inclination, all thought, all that we live, that we speak, that we breathe, will be God, and that unity which is now the Father's with the Son and the Son's with the Father will be poured into our perception and our mind, so that just as God loves us with a sincere, pure, and indissoluble love, we may be bound to God with perpetual and inseparable love, joined in such a way that whatever we breathe, whatever we know, whatever we speak, would be God.
>
> *(John Cassian,* Conference *10.7.2)*

Augustine

The Christianity of Roman Africa was famous for its emphasis on discipline. Torn since the second century by disputes about ideological and moral purity, the Christian community had strong advocates of asceticism. Tertullian (*c.* 160–*c.* 225), the first prominent Latin Christian theologian (see Chapter 48 of this volume), wrote a treatise on virginity and was involved in some manner with the Montanists, a group which combined sexual and dietary asceticism with an emphasis on prophecy (see Chapter 43). Tertullian's adherence to a rigourist view of Christian life was typical of the African church, which suffered fierce persecution and had to decide where to draw the boundaries of the community.

The links between asceticism and other ideological forces are not always clear even though the favourable attitude of the African church toward celibacy, fasting and poverty is manifest. Cyprian (d. 258), the famous bishop of Carthage, followed Tertullian's lead in writing about virginity.

Their dim view of human sexuality was part of the theological legacy later inherited by the young Augustine, an African by birth and education who went to Italy. There he fell under the spell of Ambrose in Milan (see Chapter 57) and first encountered monasticism. The story of Augustine is well known and told elsewhere in this volume (see Chapter 58). It is Augustine the monk and founder of monasteries who concerns us here.

Augustine himself tells us in Book 8 of the *Confessions* of the impact of hearing from his friend Pontitianus about Anthony the Great and those in Milan who had imitated his example. To Augustine, a sensitive and perhaps overly complex social climber and careerist, Anthony's direct response to God's call was a marvel. The fact that young men like himself had imitated Anthony came as an indictment. Augustine presents this incident as the immediate cause of his final crisis of decision, in which the issue of sexuality figured prominently. For Augustine, baptism meant asceticism. He could postulate the notion that marriage is an honourable Christian choice, but for him baptism meant a total break with everything that had gone before, which for him had included a common-law wife. Augustine's ambivalence toward human sexuality has been the subject of much recent study (e.g. Brown 1988: 387–427). It is important to remember that his theology had antecedents in both Africa and Milan.

Augustine returned to Africa after baptism, styling himself a *servus Dei* ('servant of God') and intent on establishing a monastic community. He was a deeply social being who needed companionship. It is no surprise that the *Praeceptum* ('Instruction'), the basic charter for his monastery at Hippo, emphasizes fraternal charity above all else and shows a remarkable sensitivity to the issues which might impede it, such as differences in social class, access to common goods and quarrels. Written about 397, just as Augustine became bishop of Hippo, this text circulated widely and has been used as (or as part of) a monastic rule to the present day (Lawless 1987). It was a major influence on the developing Lérinian tradition in Gaul and also on Benedict of Nursia, who borrowed from Augustine some of the tenderest lines found in his *Rule*. Augustine, or his immediate circle, also produced a brief set of instructions on monastic liturgical prayer, the *Ordo monasterii*, and an exhortation to sisterly charity sent to a monastery of women at Hippo (*Obiurgatio*). Used in combination with a feminine version of the *Praeceptum*, these made for a female monastic rule (preserved as Augustine's *Letter* 211). Augustine also addressed a major treatise on the necessity of monastic work to monks of Carthage around the year 400 (*De opere monachorum*).

In Augustine we see the monk-bishop met previously in Basil the Great. Both were concerned with the internal life of monastic communities and with ecclesiastical good order. Eager to integrate monasticism into the larger church, they were equally aware of the need to call monastic communities to social responsibility. They were harbingers of the Byzantine and Latin medieval ecclesiastical landscapes in which bishops and monastic communities were sometimes rivals, often friends, and always intertwined. The eventual extension of mandatory celibacy to all major clerical orders in the Latin church, and the Byzantine requirement that all bishops be in monastic vows, are but one sign of the influence of monasticism on the life of the church. Monastic women, despite their canonical subjection to male authority, found a freedom and self-direction that was unobtainable in other ways of life. In assessing the legacy of early Christian monasticism, it can simply be noted that for the vast majority of Christians during the last 1,500 years, a church without monasticism would have been unimaginable.

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PART IV

Everyday Christian experience

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16

READING THE NEW TESTAMENT IN ROMAN BRITAIN

Richard Cleaves

On 8 January 57 CE, Tibullus wrote in his own hand a promise to pay Gratus, a fellow freedman, the outstanding debt on merchandise sold. The waxed wooden tablet on which the note was written was discarded only to be discovered in excavations in the heart of the city of London and published in June 2016. This and the 406 other Bloomberg tablets contain the earliest pieces of writing to be discovered in Roman Britain. They 'introduce us to some of the first inhabitants of this new city . . . a diverse mix of businessmen, slaves and freedmen, with Celtic and Roman names, and soldiers from Gaul and the Rhineland' (Tomlin 2016: xv). For the first time we can hear in Britain the voices of people who were alive at the time Paul and his companions were travelling the New Testament world.

One of the biggest problems faced by anyone reading the New Testament today is that its world is quite different from our own and so we miss much that the first writers assumed their readers would be aware of. We are not attuned to the nuances of a highly stratified culture based on honour and shame, and patron–client relations, on kinship and slavery, and so on. Much has been done to open up the world of the New Testament.[1] While attention has been focused on the Eastern Mediterranean, it has not been limited to the lands of the Bible. It is possible 'to understand Paul's world not so much by going where he actually was as by going where, in the vagaries of time and place, his world is still preserved most fully and can still be seen most clearly' (Crossan and Reed 2009: 317).

That is what prompted Peter Oakes to read Romans in Pompeii (Oakes 2009) and Philip Esler to read Matthew 8:5–13 beside the Dead Sea (Esler 2014). Oakes does not claim that Romans was actually read in Pompeii: instead he suggests that the people of Pompeii were just like the people named in Romans 16. What was important for him was 'not so much the details of the Pompeian evidence. It was the experiencing of Pompeii' (Oakes 2009: xi). Neither does Esler claim that Matthew 8:5–13 was actually read beside the Dead Sea: instead, he claims that:

> The archive of the Judean woman Babatha, with its 35 legal papyri in Aramaic and Greek (P.Yadin 1–35), which was hidden by her in a cave on the western side of the Dead Sea in 135 and rediscovered in 1961, offers unique insights into the social world of the region from 94–132.
>
> *(Esler 2014: 1)*

That is what prompted him to conduct 'a thought experiment' imagining how a group of people beside the Dead Sea at that time might have read Matthew's gospel.

Might it not be possible to imagine how people from beyond the Mediterranean world might have read the New Testament? After all, since 2005 there have been moves to make the frontiers of the Roman empire 'a single transnational world heritage site' in the spirit of second-century CE Aelius Aristides who spoke of them 'enclosing the civilised world in a ring' (Breeze 2013: 8, 14). The world of the New Testament and the world of Roman Britain are enclosed within that ring: from Corinth to Colchester, people shared elements of a common culture (see Figure 16.1).

The story of Roman Britain begins with Julius Caesar's two failed invasions of 55 and 54 BCE, followed by a century of trade and commerce.[2] Ever closer links with client kingdoms among the Celtic peoples of southern Britain were nurtured by visits of key figures to Rome. In a sense the story of the New Testament world begins at the same time as Herod Antipater comes to power under Julius Caesar and the Herodian dynasty is subsequently established by Herod the Great and his sons, all of whom spent time in Rome. Theirs was a client kingdom nurtured in Rome, built on trade and commerce and great building projects. They thought nothing of dedicating temples to Augustus and the cult of the emperor even as they rebuilt the Jewish temple in Jerusalem as one of the great wonders of the world.

Figure 16.1 Reading a scroll looked the same in Corinth and Colchester: terracotta figurine, 50s or early 60s CE from the child's grave, Colchester, England. By permission of Colchester and Ipswich Museums

The Roman conquest of Britain began with the invasion of Claudius in 43 CE and was led by Vespasian, a young commander who made his name in the conquest. By the death of Claudius in 54, new towns had sprung up and his capital, Colchester, had been designated as a *colonia*, complete with a monumental temple in the classical style dedicated to Claudius and the cult of the emperor. It was the very same network of roads that now connected those new cities with the coast and so with Rome that enabled the Church to grow so rapidly at the other end of the empire. By the time Tibullus wrote to Gratus, there had been a lull in campaigning in Britain and Paul's travels were almost over: they had taken him repeatedly through Pisidian Antioch, a *colonia* which might have been the model for Colchester and had drawn him to Corinth. Writing his letter to the Romans, he outlined his plans to press on through Rome to the western frontier of the empire in Spain. It was not to be and later that year Paul was held under arrest in Caesarea where he faced questioning from among others Agrippa II, great grandson of Herod the Great. By the time he was detained in Rome and writing his letters from prison to the Colossians (if the letter is authentically Pauline) and Philemon, something momentous happened in Britain.

Prasutagus, client king of the Iceni people had died and been succeeded by his daughter Boudica. The Romans took the opportunity to integrate the kingdom into the province under Nero in a move not unlike the rejection of Archelaus in 6 CE and the imposition of direct rule on Judea and Samaria. Boudica was brutally attacked and her daughters raped. Paullinus, the Roman governor had pushed north and west through Wales to take the druidical stronghold of Mona (Ynys Mōn, Anglesey). Boudica led her people in rebellion against Rome (*c.* 60/61 CE) taking the new towns of Colchester, St Albans and London and razed them to the ground. The legions quickly marched south, Boudica was defeated, 70,000 Celtic people were killed and very quickly the towns were rebuilt. The infrastructure restored, Rome's hold over Britain was stronger than ever.

There was unrest on the eastern frontier too as the Jewish rebellion gained ground. In 66 CE, Agrippa II addressed the people of Jerusalem and urged them to heed the lessons of the Boudica revolt:

> Consider the defences of the Britons, you who feel so sure of the defences of Jerusalem. They are surrounded by the Ocean and inhabit an island as big as the land which we inhabit; yet the Romans crossed the sea and enslaved them, and four legions keep that huge island quiet.
>
> *(Josephus,* Jewish War *2.378;*
> *ET Williamson and Smallwood 1981: 160)*

The rebels did not heed his warning and took control of Jerusalem. Nero turned to the commander who had made his mark with the *II Legio Augusta* in Britain and Vespasian led the legions south from Syria to capture Jerusalem. Civil war broke out in Rome, however, prompting Vespasian to return. With the support of the British legions and many others, he became emperor in 69. His son Titus took Jerusalem and by 74 had routed the last of the rebels at Masada.

One of Vespasian's first priorities in Britain was to complete the conquest, and so with Agricola as governor from 77–84, the frontier was pushed to the western coast of mainland Britain and north into Scotland. Under Titus (79–81), Domitian (81–96), Nerva (96–98) and Trajan (98–117), the pacification of Britain was completed and *Pax Romana* achieved. It was also a period of peace in the lands of the Bible, though the manner of that pacification meant that relationships between the followers of the Way of Jesus and the Roman authorities were not always easy. This was the period when the Gospels, Acts and Revelation came to be written and the letters began to be collected and circulated more widely. The visit of Hadrian (reigned 117–138) to the eastern provinces (129–131) and his decision to rebuild Jerusalem as the Roman city Aelia Capitolina and erect a temple to Jupiter on the site of the Jewish temple, provoked a second Jewish revolt under Bar Kokhba (132–135), which Hadrian brutally put down. Documents in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Latin found in caves beside the Dead Sea are poignant reminders of the everyday life of ordinary people like the widow Babatha before the rebellion. Troubles in Britain had prompted a visit by Hadrian in 122 when construction started on

Hadrian's Wall. His finest general, Iulius Severus, was posted to Britain *c.* 130 to quell further rebellion only to be transferred to Judea in 132 to put an end to the Bar Kokhba revolt.

The late date and scant manuscript evidence for the works of Tacitus, *Agricola* (98), the *Histories* (109) and the *Annals* (117); Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* (*c.* 119–122); and Cassius Dio's the *History of Rome* (*c.* 150–235) on which all narrative history of Roman Britain depends, contrasts markedly with the comparatively early date and prolific manuscript evidence for the books of the New Testament (*c.* 48 to *c.* 100). Recent claims that the Gospels are authentic 'lives' from the ancient world stem from a detailed comparison of Tacitus' biography of his father-in-law, Agricola, with its focus on the seven years he was governor of Britain and the Gospels with their focus on the three last years of Jesus of Nazareth (Burridge 2004: ch. 7; Carter 2008: 133–41). The different perspectives and strong views of the three Roman historians colour their account of Roman Britain and have to be taken into account as modern historians draw on evidence from archaeological research, stone inscriptions, coinage and three sets of handwritten waxed, pen-and-ink and lead tablets. Likewise, the different perspectives and strong views of the writers of the New Testament colour their account of the New Testament world and have to be taken into account as modern historians draw on evidence from archaeological research, stone inscriptions, coinage and a mass of handwritten papyri. They are, however, at an advantage in that the Jewish and Gentile peoples of the New Testament world were literate and left a large body of work the context of which can be illuminated from classical literature and contemporary documents such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and the works of the Jewish Roman historian Josephus.

The debate among historians of Roman Britain over the impact of the empire is mirrored among historians of the New Testament world. Peter Salway speaks of 'Romanisation' and 'the assimilation of Britain' wherein 'anyone, or almost anyone, could absorb Roman culture and manners' (Salway 1981: 505). In contrast, David Mattingly speaks of replacing 'the simplistic paradigm of Romanisation with the idea of "discrepant experiences" of empire' (Mattingly 2007: 491) and regards Roman Britain as an *Imperial Possession*. Just as 'opinion on the balance-sheet of Roman rule in Britain is sometimes polarised between those who extol the empire and the social and cultural benefits it brought and those who want to denigrate it', so too a similar tension is found among historians of the New Testament world. Some[3] would recognise his post-colonial reading of Roman Britain in the world of the New Testament where 'the power dynamics of imperial rule are dramatically unequal and the globalising influence of the coloniser should not be underestimated' (2007: 525). Others take a more nuanced approach.[4]

Mattingly's conclusion can be echoed in the study of the New Testament world. 'The discrepant identities' of those who live in Britain under Roman occupation 'reflect a broad range of responses to Rome, from close integration to resistance, without privileging any one over the others' (2007: 525). The New Testament is witness to the 'discrepant identities' of the first Christians and their 'discrepant experiences' of the Roman Empire. As James D. G. Dunn says in his enquiry into the character of earliest Christianity, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*:

> Diversity is not some secondary feature of Christianity, not just a sequence of temporal husks which can be peeled away to leave a virgin, pure, unchanging core. *Diversity is fundamental to Christianity*. As fundamental as the unity and the tension. Christianity can only exist in concrete expressions and these concrete expressions are inescapably different from each other.
>
> *(Dunn 2006: 451f.)*

Josephus identifies the different responses of Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes and also speaks of the 'fourth philosophy' of the zealots (Josephus 1981: 133). Indeed, as John Barclay says in his study of *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, there has in recent years been 'an emphasis on plurality' that speaks of Judaisms rather than Judaism in studies of the second temple period and the period of the New Testament (Barclay 1996: 4).

As one visits archaeological sites throughout Roman Britain (Wilson 2002), aspects of the world of the New Testament come to life: the palace of a client king in Fishbourne; everyday life in a small town with its line of shops, a courtyard house, a forum and a temple at Caerwent; stratification of Roman society in the villa at Chedworth; the *colonia* of Colchester, so like Pisidian Antioch with its temple to Claudius, colonnaded arcade and a monumental gateway with perhaps an account of Claudius's achievements in the conquest of Britain; the temple to Sulis Minerva in Bath, with its many altars and inscriptions, worthy of Rome itself; inscriptions to deified emperors, milestones on a network of roads still in use and all leading to Rome. The world of Roman Britain is the world of the New Testament.

It is, however, in the rough and ready handwriting of letters, financial and legal documents, shopping lists, curses and even prayers that one touches the lives of real people just like the people who were the very first readers of the Bible. It is not so much the details of the evidence they present, interesting though they are. It is in the experiencing of the people whose writings are so remarkably well preserved that one glimpses 'the affinities which imposed themselves on the inward eye of the biblical writers' (Caird 1980: 145).

Reading the New Testament in Roman London: the Bloomberg tablets[5]

A total of 405 waxed stylus writing tablets, together with 2 stylus tags and 2 ink writing tablets were discovered during excavations carried out by the Museum of London Archaeology on the site of the new European headquarters for Bloomberg LP between 2010 and 2014. Fifteen are more or less complete, 80 carry legible traces of text and 185 are catalogued in *Roman London's First Voices – Writing Tablets from the Bloomberg Excavations, 2010–14* (Tomlin 2016). Many of the tablets were written in and around the market square that was later to become London's forum, discarded and then used as landfill beside the Walbrook stream, a tributary of the Thames. Some were found in a room that could well have served as an office.

The great majority of the tablets are plain on one side and have a recess for beeswax on the other. They are manufactured locally to an empire-wide standard design using non-native silver fir probably recycled from imported casks. With a landscape orientation, they are on average 140mm wide and 110mm high. Most would have been fastened together in pairs with twine threaded through two holes, with the writing on the recessed wax face inside. A notch between the holes was used to tie the two tablets together and so keep the content concealed (see Figure 16.2). Some were tied together in threes. A small number conform to a second standard type: both internal faces are recessed but one is divided into two panels by a groove 24mm wide. Twine used would go down the middle of the groove and be secured by seals between a name on the left and an identifier on the right. <WT (i.e. 'Wooden Tablet') 62> dating to 80–90/5 has the names of Longinus, Agrippa and Verecundus to the left and the cavalry troop they belonged to on the right – those names are to be found among 'the imperial mounted guards who were seconded from cavalry units in the provincial armies' (Tomlin 2016: 200), echoing links between Rome and Caesarea in Acts 10:1 and 23:23. A similar earlier tablet, <WT65> (see Figure 16.3) includes among the witnesses one Paullus, which is a reminder that Paul was a common Roman name. Usually with seven signatures and seals, the anticipation of the breaking of the seventh seal in Revelation 6–8:1, albeit on a scroll, and the disclosure of the content would be an experience recognised by Paullus, Marius, Saccus, Verecundus and the other signatories.

The tablets were written using a stylus, a number of which were found at the Bloomberg site. On the plain outer face the address and the addressee were inscribed direct on to the wood: three include the earliest references to the name London, <WT6, 18, 24> coupled with the recipient, a letter writing convention seen in the New Testament. The wax has been lost, but the stylus penetrated through to the wood leaving traces that are in many cases legible. Wax tablets were designed to be reused and many have been. The writing on the tablets is quite different from writing found on stone inscriptions and to the untrained eye appears very strange. It is, however, the ordinary everyday writing of the

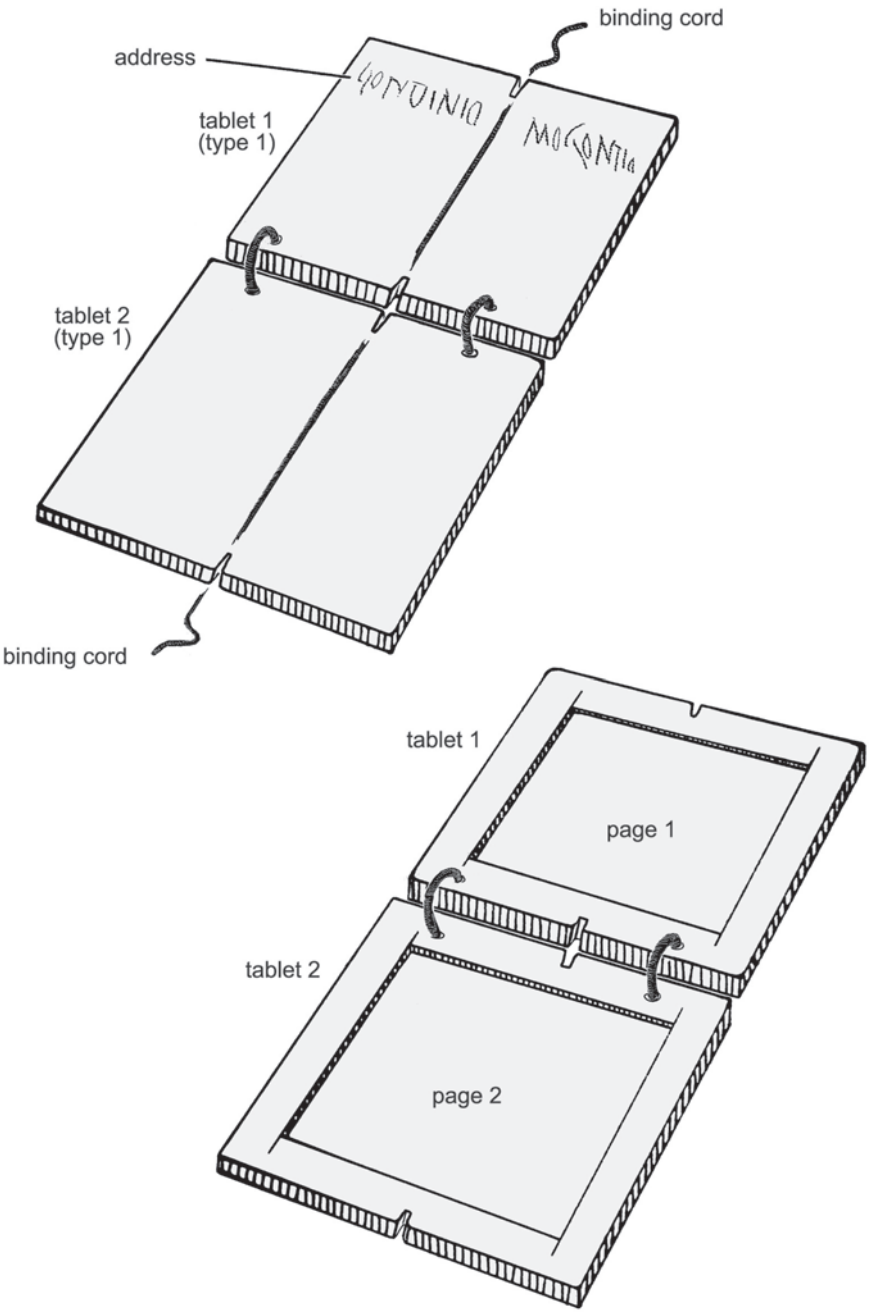
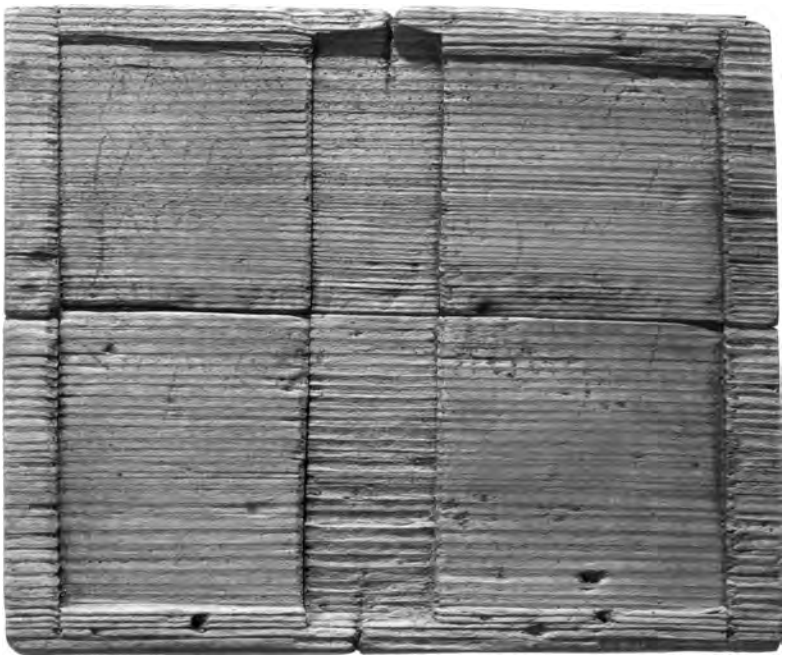
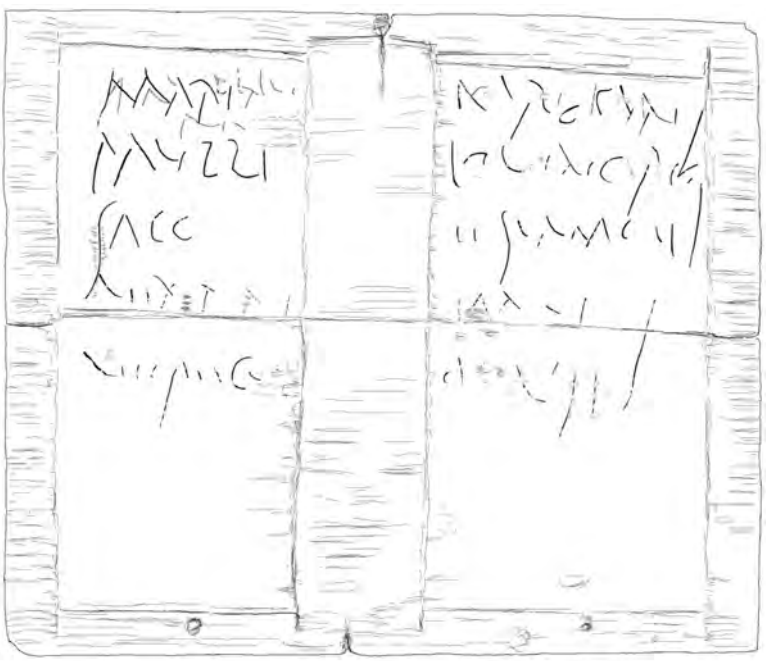


Figure 16.2 Schematic reconstruction of a diptych – a pair of standard type wooden writing tablets hinged together (after Seidel 1996: 23, figure 8, adapted for the Bloomberg tablets). Photograph by Andy Chopping. ©Museum of London Archaeology

old Roman script found with some differences in the Vindolanda tablets, in the so-called curse tablets and on papyri around the Mediterranean world in the first two centuries CE. Twelve come from the period before the Boudican revolt (60/1) and so are the first pieces of writing in Roman Britain to be contemporary with the New Testament, most of the remainder are pre-80. Of the legible tablets,





50 mm

Figures 16.3a and b Photo and sketch of stylus tablet <WT65> (grooved face), witnesses . . . Marius (perhaps Marus) . . . Paullus . . . Saccus . . . Verecundus. 137.5mm × 114.6mm. Photograph by Andy Chopping. Transcription by R. S. O. Tomlin ©Museum of London Archaeology

<WT1–43> are letters or parts of letters. <WT44–68> are financial or legal documents. <WT69–76> are accounts. <WT77–90> are a miscellany including what appear to be number and letter writing exercises. Ninety-two persons are named: slaves and freedmen, citizens and non-citizens, military and civilian, householders and tradesmen, including a number with Celtic names who may have been expatriates from other Celtic-speaking provinces. Reading these tablets, we touch the lives of ordinary people very much like those who first read the New Testament and notice aspects of the New Testament world we might otherwise miss.

On 8 January 57, at approximately the time Paul was probably in Corinth, writing to the Romans telling them of his intention to visit Rome and travel on to the western extremity of the empire in Spain, Tibullus, a freedman, wrote to another freedman, Gratus, using dating conventions familiar to readers of Luke and Acts:

> In the consulship of Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus for the second time and of Lucius Calpurnius Piso, on the 6th day before the Ides of January [8 January 57 CE]. I, Tibullus the freedman of Venustus, have written and say that I owe Gratus the freedman of Spurius 105 denarii from the price of the merchandise which has been sold and delivered. This money I am due to repay him or the person whom the matter will concern <WT44> (see Figure 16.4a and 16.4b).

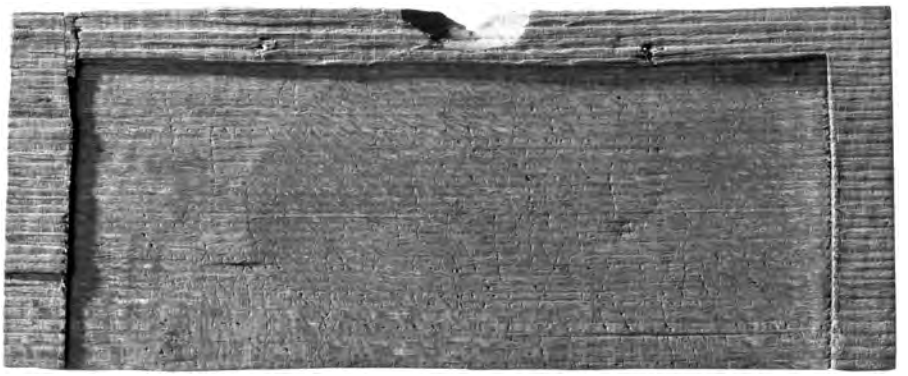
Tibullus writes in his own hand using a formulaic convention found in <WT53> and elsewhere, 'I have written and say that I owe' (*scripsi et dico me | debere*). Tomlin suggests that Tibullus and Gratus, 'the two freedmen may have been independent businessmen, but it is quite likely that they were acting as agents or partners of their patrons (and former masters)', Venustus, a non-citizen, and Spurius, a citizen of Rome. Tibullus acknowledges his debt to Gratus for part of the price of 'merchandise' (*mercis*) which has been 'sold and passed on' (*uendita et tradita*) set at 105 denarii. Not only does Tibullus say of the money owed, 'I am due to repay him' *ei reddere debeo* but he also recognises that the debt might have been sold on.

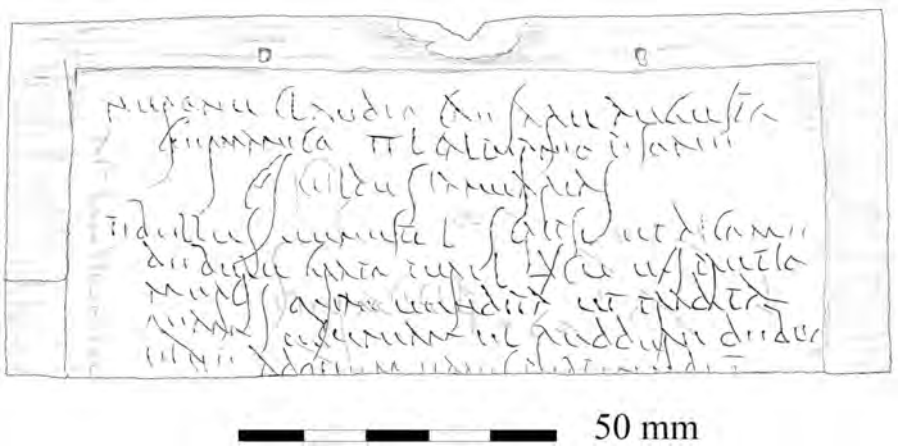
Within fourteen years after the invasion of Britain, the Romans have not only built a town at this key crossing of the Thames, but they have also introduced an infrastructure based on trade and commerce sustained by money, debt and promissory notes, a culture based on honour and patronage that is typical of the whole of the Roman empire. As Tacitus observed, it had already become 'an important centre for business-men and merchandise' (*Annals* xiv.33).

The *denarii* referred to here are the *denarii* of the New Testament. Richard Reece calculates the value of a *denarius* found in Britain with reference to Matt. 20:1–2, where in Jesus' parable a day's wage is said to be one *denarius* (Reece 2002: ch. 5), approximately £60 on the basis of the value of the official UK living wage in 2016. Tibullus and Gratus are involved in big business with a debt of approximately £6,300 at today's value. What might the merchandise be? Although from the fourth and fifth century, the Vulgate is useful in indicating how the Greek of the New Testament might have been understood in the Latin world. The word used for merchandise, *merx*, *mercis* is used in Rev. 18:11 of the merchants (*negotiatores*) of the world when their merchandise is no longer purchased – the merchandise envisaged in Rev. 18:12f. gives an interesting insight into what Tibullus and Gratus might possibly have been dealing in. Merchandise:

> of gold, silver, jewels and pearls, fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet, all kinds of scented wood, all articles of ivory, all articles of costly wood, bronze, iron, and marble, cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, choice flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, slaves and human lives.

Optatus is another merchant who possibly deals in foodstuffs <WT7>. It is to such merchants as the ones we meet in London that Jesus likens the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 13:45).





Figures 16.4a and b Photo and sketch of the inner face of stylus tablet <WT44> written by one Tibullus, the freedman of Venustus to Gratus, the freedman of Spurius promising to pay 105 denarii. 137.3mm × 56.2mm. Photograph by Andy Chopping. ©Museum of London Archaeology

To read <WT44> is to get to know Philemon and Onesimus. The opening of Paul's letter to Philemon is like so many of the London letters <WT1–43>: the name 'Paul' is qualified by an identifier that indicates he is 'a prisoner' quite possibly in Rome *c.* 60/61; it is followed by the name of the addressee, Philemon. It is clear from the letter that Philemon is a slave-owning householder, perhaps like Catullus of <WT14> whose house is opposite Junius, the cooper. Paul, Aquila and Priscilla were also known by their trade as tentmakers (Acts 18:2). One of Philemon's slaves, Onesimus, has run away to Rome where he has been an immense help to Paul who now asks Philemon to take him back into his household. Paul assumes Philemon to be a man of honour and acknowledges that he could command Philemon 'to do his duty'. Tibullus and Gratus are freedmen and yet they still work for their former masters, Venustus and Spurius, as agents under their patronage. For Philemon to 'do his duty', it would be possible for him to take Onesimus back into his household no longer as a slave but as a freedman under his patronage. In matters of ownership, whether of goods, slaves or money, honour is all important. A debt-based economy depends on the honour of all concerned. Tibullus assumes Gratus will regard him as a man of honour and likewise 'the person whom the matter will concern', a possible future assignee of the debt. That phrase occurs in two other tablets.

<WT55> dates to the time Paul was probably writing to Philemon: 60/1–62. It is a financial document to do with a loan that is to be repaid with interest, one of those points of tension between the Roman and Jewish worlds:

> and the principal and the interest on them which he shall have owed . . . to be properly managed in good (coin) whenever he shall have requested . . .
> To Narcissus (the slave) of Rogatus the Lingonian, Atticus . . . has properly, truly, faithfully promised (it is) to be given, to Ingenuus . . . or to him to whom the matter will pertain. And in the presence of those who have been written in (their own) hand above, Atticus has said that he owes and holds and has received before this day . . . <WT55>.

The language of honour figures large: the arrangement will be 'properly managed in good (coin)' as Atticus, the debtor, 'has properly, truly, faithfully promised' Ingenuus and whoever the loan has been sold on to, *ad quem ea res pertinebit*. The Latin translation of Philemon 8, rendered by the NRSV as 'to command you to do your duty' uses this same phrase: *imperandi tibi quod ad rem pertinet*. Honour marks the relationship between Narcissus and Atticus and between Tibullus and Gratus. Honour and patronage mark the relationship between Tibullus and his one-time master Venustus. Tomlin notes that Narcissus, although clearly a slave, might also be acting as agent for his master, Rogatus. One of the financial documents is a receipt, dating to 64 CE when 'Florentinus, the slave of Sextus Cassius [. . .]tus' writes in his own hand, 'by order of his master that he has received the two payments from the . . . farm . . . ' <WT50>. It begs the question whether the dependence of the new town on the surrounding countryside is equitable, a question that is also raised in Galilee (Neyrey and Stewart 2008: chs. 7, 8). It is not only literacy that extends to slaves but also the honour involved in making legally binding agreements. Is this the relationship based on honour that Paul envisages between slave and master in Col 3:22–4:1 on the basis of which Philemon is to do his duty?

Such words from Paul are necessary because an honour code can be broken. One of the earliest of the tablets <WT30> dating between 43 and 53 is addressed to someone called Titus who is in danger of getting a bad name for himself precisely because he has broken the honour code. The address is written on the plain face, 'You will give (this) to Titus . . . ' and the seven lines are on what remains of the recessed side:

> because they are boasting through the whole market that you have lent them money. Therefore I ask you in your own interest not to appear shabby (*turpis*) . . . you will not thus favour your own affairs . . . <WT30>.

A more telling translation of *turpis* would be 'shameful' or 'dishonourable'. It is the word used in the Latin translation of Daniel 13:63 (Sus. 1:63) when Susanna 'was found innocent of a shameful deed' (*non esset inventa in ea res turpis*) and frequently in the New Testament to speak of shameful behaviour and the misuse of money. The way Titus has lent money is in danger of bringing shame and dishonour to his name. By a curious coincidence, one use of the word in the New Testament is in the letter addressed to another Titus. When Paul warns of 'deceivers' who are 'upsetting whole families by teaching for sordid gain' (*turpis lucri gratia*) he may have in mind those who, like London's Titus, extort money for gain in a way that is dishonourable or shameful and so in William Tyndale's translation of the word turn it into 'filthy lucre' (Titus 1:11; cf. 1 Tim 3:8, Titus 1:7, 1 Peter 5:2).

In his letter to Philemon, Paul could have commanded Philemon simply to do his duty in accord with this honour code. Paul, however, goes further suggesting that Philemon should welcome Onesimus back as 'more than a slave, a beloved brother' (16). For as he says in Col. 3:1 and 11, the message of Jesus becomes good news for people like Tibullus and Gratus and Narcissus and Atticus and Titus because it involves being 'raised with Christ' to a new order where 'there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all'.

It is at this point in his letter to Philemon that Paul realises that what he asks has big implications for Philemon. Paul recognises the possible financial implications of what Onesimus has done and so Paul makes a commitment to settle any outstanding debt. Paul uses language we encounter in <WT44> and elsewhere in the Bloomberg tablets. 'If he owes you anything', says Paul, 'charge that to my account'. Any debt owed by Onesimus can be assigned, passed on, as it were, to Paul who shows that it is perfectly proper to have things on account. To seal the commitment, he uses the very same formulaic words we encounter in <WT44 and 55> and elsewhere. 'I, Paul, have written this with my own hand: I will repay it' *ego Paulus scripsi mea manu ego reddam* (Phil. 19).

Of the 80 legible tablets, no fewer than 25 are loan-notes or have to do with the management of debt and payment by account (Tomlin 2016: 57). This is the world Paul knows: 'Pay to all what is due them – taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honour to whom honour is due' (Rom. 13:7). It was, however, a world where debt could be pernicious. Jesus envisaged a different order in the prayer he taught his disciples: 'forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors' (Matt. 6:12). One of Jesus' larger-than-life parables is rooted in this world of commerce and debt. One slave owes another slave 100 *denarii*, virtually the sum Tibullus owed Gratus and therefore a true-to-life amount. If a talent is equivalent to 6,000 *denarii*, the other slave owes the king the princely sum of £60,000,000. It is the sheer unimaginable scale of the sum forgiven by the king and the ordinariness of the sum that slave is not prepared to forgive that give the story its force as Jesus maps out a new order based on the forgiveness of debt (Matt. 18:23–35).

In other letters, Paul writes in his own hand to emphasise the importance of personal greetings (1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; 2 Thes. 3:17). In Philemon he is doing more than that: by writing in his own hand he is stating emphatically that he will honour the debt he owes. On another occasion, Marcus Salvius uses a particularly strong word that, as it is a transliteration from the Greek, undoubtedly comes from the Eastern Mediterranean to emphasise such a commitment:

> To Vialicus, the freedman of Secundio, greetings. Would you receive the note of hand of the slave of ?Marcus Salvius M[. . .] <WT27>.

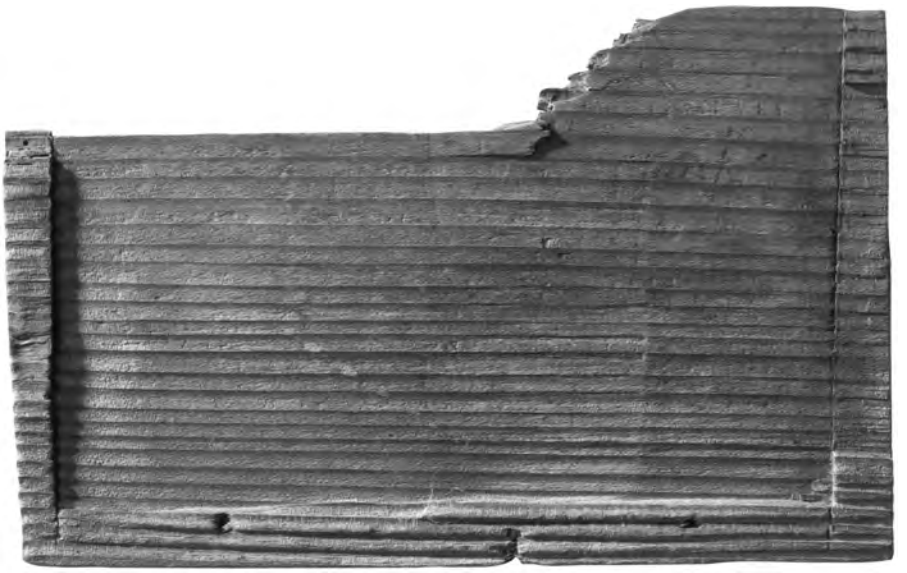
The Greek term, translated here 'note of hand' is the word *c*<h>*irographum* and refers to a document acknowledging debt or promising payment. It is used by Paul in Col. 2:14 as an illustration to bring home to his readers the transformation brought by Jesus on the cross. The 'note of hand' in which we accept responsibility for all that we owe is nailed to the cross as we are forgiven:

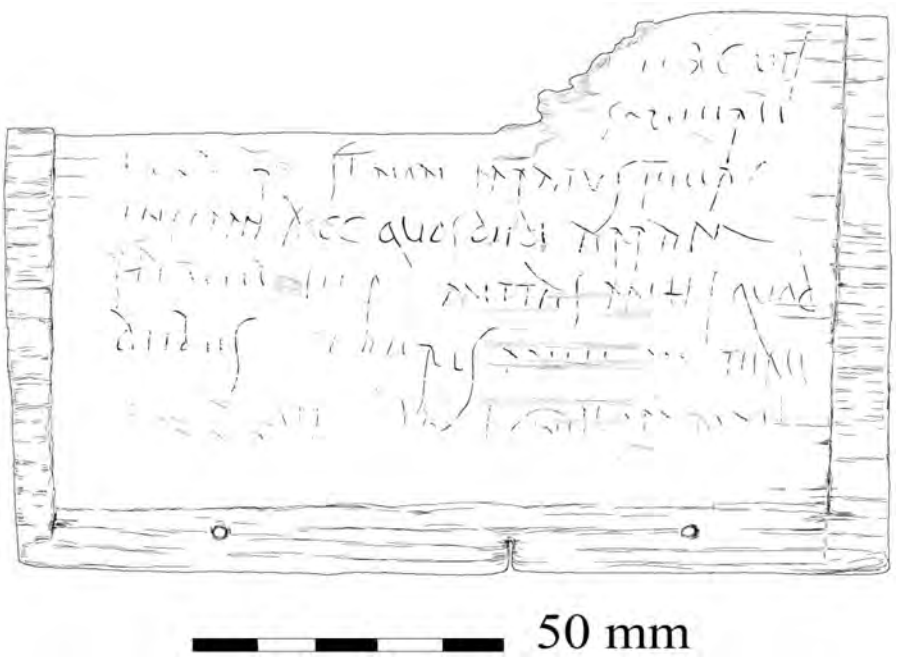
> And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross.

Many of the writing tablets show evidence of being used repeatedly. It is the nature of the wax tablet that the writing can be erased. It is the very nature of a wooden tablet that it can then be 'nailed to the cross'. Set in the context of the personal letter to Philemon and the letter to the church that meets in his house, these words are vibrant with meaning that Marcus Silvius, Tibullus and so many others from the London of that time would immediately recognise, meaning that is largely lost to us.

Large sums of money are involved in many of the transactions taking place in London in this period. There is a note of urgency in what remains of <WT35> (65/70–80):

> . . . to pay . . . ?he was not surprised to watch over . . . for it 200 denarii which I have given (as) deposit . . . would you send me what you owe . . . you will . . . <WT35> (see Figure 16.5).





Figures 16.5a and b Stylus tablet <WT35> (ungrooved face), requesting money owed. 140.7mm × 90.3mm. Photograph by Andy Chopping. Transcription by R. S. O. Tomlin. ©Museum of London Archaeology

Honour makes it possible to put down the significant sum of £12,000 as a deposit. The word translated 'deposit' is the feminine word *arra*, alternatively spelt *arrha* and *arrhabo* (see Figure 16.5, line 4, last word). According to Lewis and Short, it is based on the word *ʿērabon* that they suggest comes

from the Hebrew (Lewis and Short 1879: 165). Yet it is much more likely to come from the closely related language of Phoenician, as used by Punic traders around the Mediterranean, and refers to money given as part of the purchase money to ratify a contract. The Greeks adopted *'ērabon* virtually unchanged as *arrabōn*, while the Romans adopted either the Phoenician or Greek word as *arrhabo*, as well as producing the shortened forms of *arrha* and *arra*. Pliny used *arra* ironically when speaking of the money given to physicians as a down payment in anticipation of death (Pliny 29.1.8 § 21).

An even greater sum is involved in a transaction recorded in a letter from Vindolanda: Octavius has bought a considerable amount of grain and so is in need of cash. There is a note of desperation in what he writes to Candidus (here we again find the word *arra*):

> Unless you send me some cash, at least five hundred *denarii* (*c.* £30,000), the result will be that I shall lose what I have laid out as a deposit (*arre*), about three hundred *denarii*, (£18,000) and I shall be embarrassed. So, I ask you, send me some cash as soon as possible.
> *(Tab. Vindol. 343)*

Accordingly, as early as the 60s or 70s in London and the end of the century in Vindolanda, the term *arra* is being used in financial dealings in the way it is later described by Gaius in his commentary on the *Institutes of Civil Law*: 'what is given by way of earnest money is only a proof of the conclusion

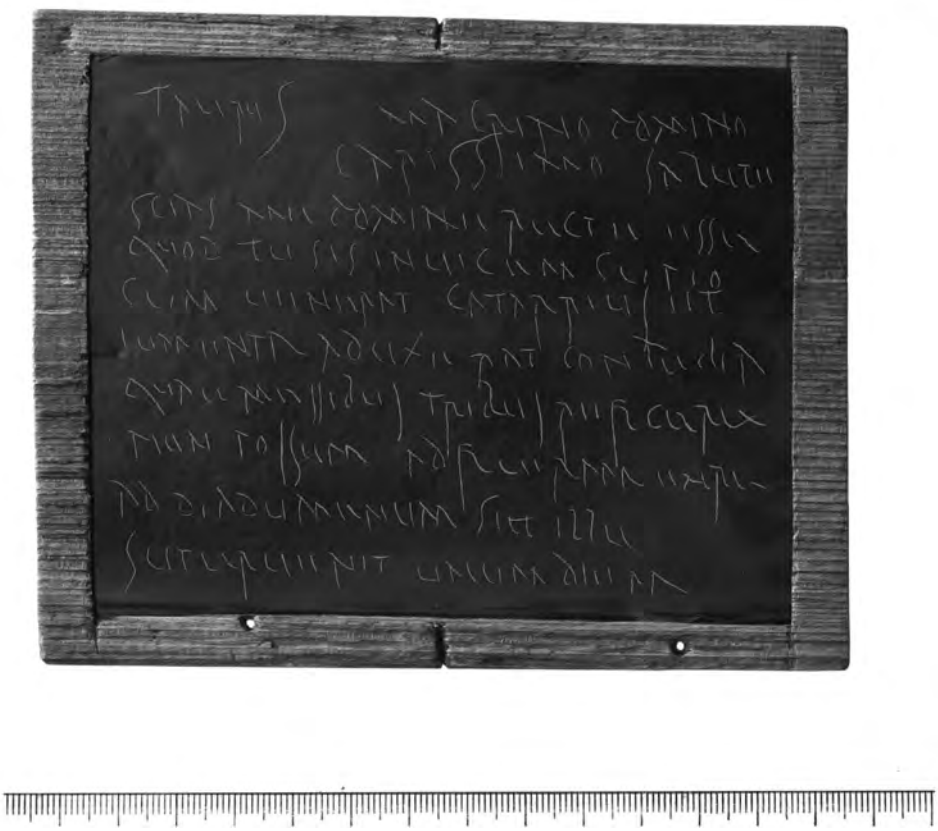


Figure 16.6 Stylus tablet <WT29> as it may have originally appeared; traces of earlier (and/or corrected) text have been removed and lost text conjecturally reconstructed. 139.4mm × 113.7mm. Photographic reconstruction by Andy Chopping. Text by R. S. O. Tomlin. ©Museum of London Archaeology

of a contract of purchase and a sale' (Gaius 3:139). Similarly, the Greek version, *arrabōn*, is used three times by Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5 and Ephesians 1:13b–14. It is the Holy Spirit that is regarded as 'a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance' (NIV). When seen through the eyes of this anonymous writer in London or Octavius in Vindolanda, seemingly technical theological jargon is recognised for what it is: metaphorical language as familiar in the business dealings of London and Vindolanda as in the commercial transactions of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Gaius Valerius Proculus might have recognised a lowly trader with whom he contracted in the Samaritan of Jesus' parable. Gaius Valerius Proculus needed someone with a wagon or a beast of burden, *iumentum*, like the one stolen by Catallus from Taurus <WT29> (see Figure 16.6) to fulfil a contract drawn up by Marcus Rennius Venustus on 21 October 62.

Reconstructed text of <WT29>:	Translation of reconstructed text:
taurus macrino domino	Taurus to Macrinus his dearest lord,
carissimo salute	greetings.
scias me domine recte esse	Know that I am in good health,
quod tu sis inuicem cupio	which I desire that you are too.
cum unerat catarrius et	When Catarrius had come and
iumenta aduxerat conpedia	had taken the beasts of burden away,
quae messibus tribus reficere	investments which I cannot
non possum adfueram ehre	replace in three months,
ad diadumenum set ille	I was (at the house of) Diadumenus yesterday
superuenit unum diem	but he (Catarrius) arrived unexpectedly for a single day . . .

Marcus would pay one quarter of a *denarius*, a *quadrans* or four *asses*, for each load (probably on a donkey or ass), a miniscule payment possibly reflecting the exploitation of local traders. From that small sum one quarter would be kept back only to be paid on completion of the contract:

> In the consulship of Publius Marius Celsus and Lucius Afinius Gallus, on the 12th day before the Kalends of November [21 October 62]. I, Marcus Rennius Venustus, (have written and say that) I have contracted with Gaius Valerius Proculus that he bring from Verulamium by the Ides of November [13 November] 20 loads of provisions at a transport charge of one-quarter denarius for each, on condition that . . . one *as* . . . to London; but if . . . the whole . . . <WT45>.

Like the Samaritan, that local trader walked the same route regularly with his *iumentum*. There is nothing special about the arrangement the Samaritan makes when he hands over the two *denarii* (£120 or three nights at a Premier Inn) and says, 'I will repay you [*reddam tibi*] whatever more you spend' (Luke 10:35): it is exactly the business culture of money and debt within a framework of honour and trust that we see on the road from London to St Albans as those cities are being rebuilt immediately after the Boudica revolt.

The law underpins financial transactions as well as honour. In one of the later tablets <WT57> (80–90/5), it would appear that someone has been given permission to go to law, having made a legal undertaking (*sponsionem facere iudicio certare*). Litugenus and Magunus may have been living on the north-western fringe of the empire, but they had access to a legal system rooted in Rome and recognisable across the empire:

> In the consulship of the Emperor Caesar Vespasian for the seventh time (and) of Titus for the fifth time, on the 11th day before the Kalends of November [22 October 76]. Responsibility [for the case] between Litugenus and Magunus on the 5th day before the Ides of November [9 November] having been given by the emperor, my preliminary judgment is . . . <WT51>.

Formally appointed by the emperor, in practice the judge was probably appointed by the governor or his deputy in the absence of magistrates in London. The case is what we would today call a directions hearing. This is the justice Paul encountered on his travels in Acts from Philippi to Caesarea and Rome. We do not know how just or unjust the judge was: the world Jesus knew had its share of unjust judges (Luke 18:1–8).

The people of London lived 'by bread and salt' <WT31> and would know instinctively the importance of 'daily bread' (Matt. 6:11) and the challenge to be 'the salt of the earth' (Matt. 5:13). The money they dealt in was the money we encounter in the New Testament, even down to the debt of 26 *denarii* that was to be settled in 52 *victoriati*, a coin related to the *drachma* lost by the woman of Jesus' parable in Luke 15:8. They would have recognised it was not simply a tradition that Paul received and then delivered when he spoke of the Lord's Supper and of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor. 11:23 and 15:3); it was something that had the same substance as the merchandise Tibullus and Gratus were trading in <WT44>. Theirs was the same world of honour, shame, patronage and debt.

Reading the New Testament in a frontier fort: the Vindolanda Tablets[6]

The conquest of Britain reached its furthest extent with the defeat of the Caledonian tribes at Mons Grautius in 82/83. Tacitus bemoaned the fact that with Agricola's subsequent return to Rome and the cessation of campaigning, it meant that the opportunity to take the whole island of Britain was lost. A line of forts, linked by a road since medieval times known as the Stanegate, was established at the narrowest point across the mainland from Carlisle to Corbridge. The fort of Vindolanda, half way along the road a mile south of the later Hadrian's Wall, depended on prolific record keeping and extensive letter writing. Discarded in damp soil and later covered by clay as the fort was redeveloped, that archive, along with fabrics, leather goods and a great number of shoes, was remarkably well preserved in anaerobic conditions. Since 1973, in excavations led by Alan Bowman, more than 1,000 pen-and-ink writing tablets comprising letters, accounts, inventories and legal documents written between 85 and 130 have been excavated, photographed and preserved. Post-card size, about 150mm x 100mm and often folded with the address on one side, the wooden tablets give a remarkable insight into the everyday life of soldiers and civilians, women and men, slaves and free, living in a Roman fort at the end of the first century. They show that the economic and social life of the empire was clearly built on:

> the widespread writing of good Latin, with common formats, methods and patterns among the officer class in northern Britain, extending to their wives and their slaves, to their correspondents (whoever they were), into the non-officer class, perhaps even the ranks and the traders with military connection.
>
> *(Bowman 2003: 92; cf. Bowman and Thomas 1994)*

Written in the old Roman cursive script familiar on papyri, with slight differences from the Bloomberg tablets due to the use of pen and ink, they demonstrate 'that it is overwhelmingly likely that at the time pen-and-ink cursive Latin was being written in the same way all over the empire' (Bowman 2003: 86). Indeed, an identical wooden writing tablet, but written in Aramaic, was discovered in the Cave of Letters beside the Dead Sea in 1960 by Y. Yadin. Concealed in a leather water skin and

protected against the 'evil eye' by herbs and stones tied in a handkerchief, the four 'thin inscribed slats of wood' were found in the bundle of papyri still bound together by cord that turned out to be the Bar Kokhba letters. From 'Shim'on Bar Kosiba, the Prince over Israel' (and leader of the second Jewish revolt), it was a letter dealing with the confiscation and transfer of a quantity of wheat, a threat of punishment and an arrest order. 'The practice of writing on wood was widespread throughout the Orient', comments Yadin, 'and is often mentioned in rabbinical literature' (Yadin 1961: 40–2; Bowman and Thomas 1983).

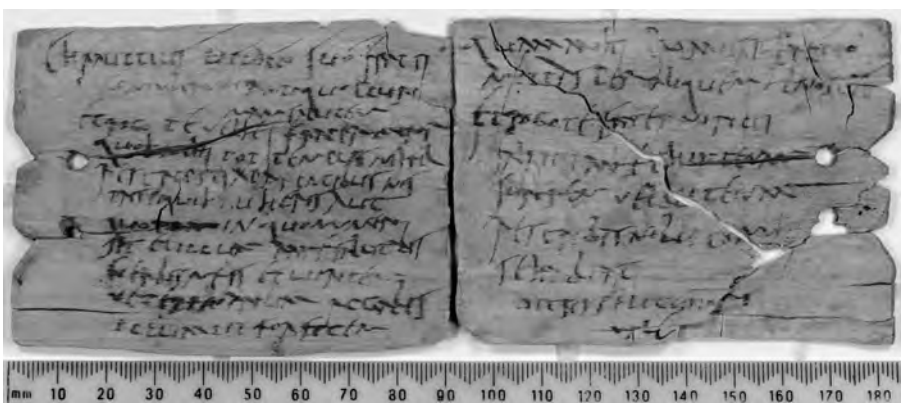
Learning to read and write involved in London writing exercises using numerals <WT77, 78> and the alphabet <WT79> and in Vindolanda copying from Vergil's Aeneid (Tab. Vindol. 118, 121) in exactly the way someone in a garrison on Herod's fort at Masada had done on papyrus in the early 70s CE (Bowman 2003: 88f.). This is the literate world of the soldiers and passers-by at the foot of the cross who read the inscription, quite possibly on a wooden tablet in the same old Roman cursive script in Hebrew, Latin and Greek (John 19:19).

Chrauttius and many other Vindolanda correspondents would recognise the formality and intimacy of the opening and closing of Paul's letters (see Figures 16.7a and 16.7b).

Just as Paul writes intimately of brothers and sisters and speaks of Epaphroditus and Archippus as fellow-soldiers (Phil. 2:25 and Philemon 2) and often adds a greeting in his own hand (1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; 2 Thes. 3:17; Col. 2:14; Philemon 19), so too does Chrauttius when he writes to Veldeius,

(a)

(b)



Figures 16.7a and b Back and front of a letter from Chrauttius in Vindolanda to Veldeius in London. 189mm × 70mm. Tab. Vindol. 310. Photograph ©The Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents and the British Museum

his brother and messmate mentioning his sister Thuttena. He is able to send his letter the approximately 350 miles to London on the network of roads Paul depended on in his letter writing too:

> Chrauttius to Veldeius his brother and old messmate, very many greetings. And I ask you, brother Veldeius – I am surprised that you have written nothing back to me for such a long time – whether you have heard anything from our elders, or about . . . in which unit he is; and greet him from me in my words and Virilis the veterinary doctor. Ask him (*sc.* Virilis) whether you may send through one of our friends the pair of shears which he promised me in exchange for money. And I ask you, brother Virilis, to greet from me our sister Thuttena. Write back to us how Velbuteius is (?). (2nd hand?) It is my wish that you enjoy the best of fortune. Farewell.
>
> (Back)
>
> (Deliver) at London. To Veldedeius, groom of the governor, from his brother Chrauttius.
>
> *(Tab. Vindol. 310; see Figure 16.7)*

If Chrauttius were to read that 5,000 sat in companies (*contubernia*) (Mark 6:39), he would be quick to see a force the size of a legion and not be surprised to read in John 6:15 that 'they were about to come and take him by force to make him king'. Perhaps he would have been intrigued by Jesus' refusal to take up arms.

The women correspondents of Vindolanda include Sulpicia Lepidina, wife of Flavius Cerialis, commander of the fort *c.* 100. When Claudia Severa, wife of another commander, invited Lepidina to her birthday party, she too added a personal greeting in her own hand, 'I shall expect you, sister. Farewell, sister, my dearest soul, as I hope to prosper, and hail' (Tab. Vindol. 291; see Figure 16.8).

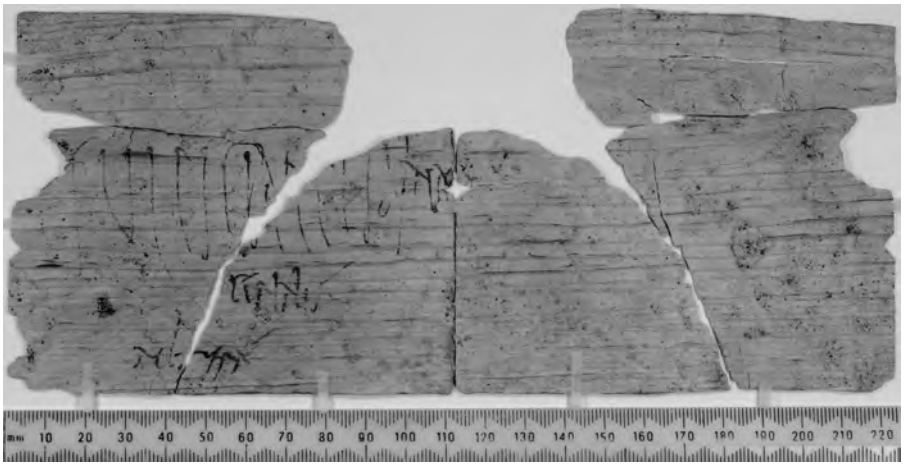
From the Vindolanda tablets it is clear that women not only have a part to play in the life of a fort but also that through their literacy they can bring pressure to bear on those in authority. (Allason-Jones 2005: 46f., 191f.) There was an expectation that Lepidina could influence her husband as Valatta knew when she wrote to Cerialis:

> Valatta to her Cerialis, greetings. I ask my lord that you relax your severity (?) and through Lepidina that you grant me what I ask (?) . . .
>
> *(Tab. Vindol. 257)*

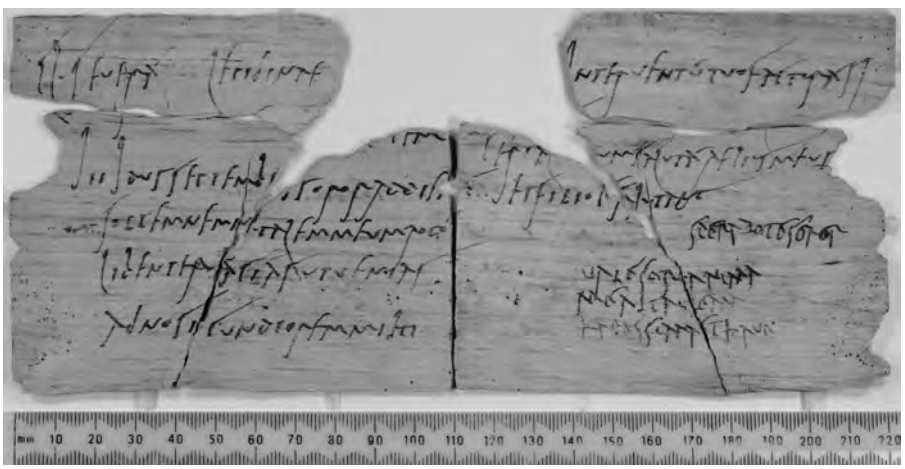
Valatta and Lepidina would not be surprised at the influence Pilate's wife hoped to exert in Matthew 27:19.

If literacy extended to the wives of officers in the fort at Vindolanda, it would not be unreasonable to expect it of Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and possibly the other women who 'provided for' Jesus and the twelve 'out of their resources' (Luke 8:1–3). The resources needed for the garrison are detailed in administrative documents. Tab. Vindol. 180 details the amount of wheat required for making bread for the 'oxherds at the wood', it speaks of 'Amabilis at the shrine', and a request 'to Felicius Victor for twisted loaves' and what was needed for 'the legionary soldiers on the order of Firmus'. 'Lucco, in charge of the pigs', is provided for as is the person 'in charge of the oxen'. Those in the fort knew what it took to resource a garrison. People such as these accustomed to feasting and fish sauce (Tab. Vindol. 190, 191, 202, 302, 594) might well have recognised the banqueting Jesus spoke of so often and assumed that Zebedee and his hired men (Mark 1:20) fished not only for their families but also for the Roman banqueting table in the new city of Tiberias (Crossan and Reed 2001: 123–5). In the exclusion and reinstatement of Legion, they would have recognised the culture of honour and shame and may have wondered whether in his name and the plight of the pigs there was reference to them and their way of life in a fort (Myers 1988: 198f.). The fact that it is possible to compare commodities and prices in Vindolanda with records on papyri and ostraca in Egypt (Bowman 2003: 64f., 68f.) shows that military life was recognisable from one frontier to the

(a)



(b)



Figures 16.8a and b Back and front of a letter from Claudia Severa to Sulpicia Lepidina. 223mm × 96mm. Tab. Vindol. 291. Photograph ©The Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents and the British Museum

other. The dependence of the fort on local farmers for produce in large quantities and its implications for relationships with the local population raise the kind of questions that are raised on the eastern frontier too (Neyrey and Stewart 2008: chs 7, 8; Mattingly 2011: 160–5, 353f.). Those in the fort at Vindolanda might have expected bread for 5,000 to be on sale in the villages of Galilee (Luke 9:13).

It is not only foodstuffs that the Romans need: it is leather for their shoes, fabrics for their clothes, timber and stone for their buildings. Purchasers of the 'purple curtains' priced at a costly 99 5/8 denarii (Tab. Vindol. 596) would have understood that Lydia could run a business trading in that kind of material (Acts 16:14). Vocontios, a centurion, is clearly in charge of building, but seems to be reluctant to sort out the necessary orders prompting an anonymous writer to enquire about the 'quantity of wagons' that will be required to carry the stone (Tab. Vindol. 316). As the strength report of the First Cohort of Tungrians (Tab. Vindol. 154) indicates, centurions and their men were not all resident in the fort all the time. Some are stationed in nearby Corbridge, one is in London and another in York. These arrangements may help account for the presence of a centurion in Capernaum building for the local community (Luke 7:5), another in Jerusalem at the foot of the

cross (Mark 15:39) and another in Caesarea (Acts 10:1). When Paul asks Timothy to 'bring the cloak (*paenulam*) I left with Carpus at Troas' it is exactly the same item as the 'cloak', *paenula*, listed in an inventory for the household of Flavius Cerialis obtained from Tranquillus (Tab. Vindol. 196). The 'books and parchments' he asks for are equivalent to the manufactured writing tablets that would be needed in Vindolanda, perhaps referred to in Tab. Vindol. 283.

The Vindolanda tablets reflect the same money-based economy built on debt and honour. In correspondence between Maior, an imperial administrator who was possibly a freedman of Nerva, and Cocceius Maritimus, arrangements are made to settle a debt in the familiar language of the Bloomberg tablets. A note in the margin seems to plan the transference of a slave, *puer*, which will require a 'note of hand':

> If you intend to send a boy to me(?), send a note of hand (*chir[o-]*
> [*grafum*]) with him so that I may be the more reassured.
>
> *(Tab. Vindol. 645)*

The vibrant metaphorical language of Col 2:14 with its reference to 'erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands' would have been as recognisable in the military world of Vindolanda as in the business world of London <WT27>. It is that personal note of hand, *chirografum*, that provides the guarantee to seal the arrangement.

Such transactions are set within a clear legal framework. The writer of Tab. Vindol. 344 seems to have been a local trader who cannot get satisfaction from within the fort. He appeals to the *maiestas*, referring probably to the emperor's representative, the provincial governor, rather than the emperor himself:

> he beat (?) me all the more . . . goods . . . or pour them down the drain (?). As befits an honest man (?) I implore your majesty not to allow me, an innocent man, to have been beaten with rods and, my lord, inasmuch as (?) I was unable to complain to the prefect because he was detained by ill-health I have complained in vain (?) to the *beneficiarius* and the rest (?) of the centurions of his (?) unit. Accordingly (?) I implore your mercifulness not to allow me, a man from overseas and an innocent one, about whose good faith you may inquire, to have been bloodied by rods as if I had committed some crime.
>
> *(Tab. Vindol. 344)*

This writer from Vindolanda, together with the London writer of <WT51>, would have recognised the justice or lack of it Paul experienced in Philippi, in Caesarea and in Rome (Acts 16:21–28); they would not have been surprised to read of the beatings Jesus (Mark 14:65) and Paul experienced (2 Cor. 6:1–12 and 11:16–33). Within the ring enclosed by the frontiers was a brutality they knew only too well. The world of the frontier fort, no less than the world of London, was the world of kinship and comradeliness, of money and debt, of honour and shame that the first readers of the New Testament took for granted.

Reading the New Testament in the temples of Roman Britain: the so-called curse tablets[7]

A handful of so-called curse tablets had been found prior to 1976 in Britain since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Referred to as *defixiones* and written with a stylus on lead in old, and from the late third century, new Roman cursive, they are 'inscribed pieces of lead, usually in the form of small, thin sheets, intended to influence, by supernatural means, the actions or welfare of persons or animals against their will' (Jordan 1985: 151) and are rarely more than 120mm x 80mm. One discovered in London in 1934 is a curse on Tretia Maria and has been pierced by nails:

> I curse (*defico*) Tretia Maria and her life and mind and memory and liver and lungs mixed up together, and her words, thoughts and memory, thus may she be unable to speak what things are concealed, nor be able . . . nor . . . 2 RIB 7.
>
> *(Collingwood et al. 1995)*

The cursing Paul rejects in Romans 12:14 would be recognisable in the Roman world of the curse tablets: 'Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them' (Rom. 12:14).

In 1976–9, 140 similar lead tablets were discovered at a temple to Mercury in Uley on the Cotswold escarpment and a further 90 at the temple to Sulis Minerva in Bath in 1978–83. Since then, more discoveries have brought the number in Britain to more than 300, all but one of which have been found in non-military locations and all south of Nottingham (Mattingly 2007: 310–14, 2011: 227). Most have been transcribed and translated by Roger Tomlin (Cunliffe *et al.* 1985; Woodward and Leach 1993). Tomlin, importantly, noticed that the newly discovered tablets were not straightforward curses, since they were addressed to Mercury in Uley and to the Celtic Sulis or the Roman equivalent Minerva in Bath, not to the gods of the underworld as so many of the *defixiones* proper were addressed. They did not use the word *defigere*; indeed RIB 6, 7 and 221 remained in 1988 the only tablets to include that word. The tablets discovered in Bath had a different feel to them. 'If asked to define what they were composing', Tomlin suggests, 'the authors of tablets from Bath might well have used the word "devotion" (cf Tab. Sulis 10.5), *ex(s)ecratio* (cf. Tab. Sulis 99.1) or "donation" (cf. Tab. Sulis 8.1)' (Tomlin 1988: 59). He later notes that the appearance, the content and the language of the tablets discovered in Uley are 'broadly similar' (Woodward and Leach 1993: 114). Noting that one of the Uley tablets describes itself as a 'memorandum', Tomlin suggests '*donatio*' as the most likely term, given the frequent references to giving stolen property or indeed the thief himself to Sulis.

Independently, H. S. Versnel came to the same conclusion, namely, that along with many of the so-called curse tablets in the Graeco-Roman world of the Mediterranean, the newly discovered British tablets are better described as 'judicial prayers' (Versnel 1991b) or 'prayers for justice' (Versnel 2010). A much earlier assessment of a tablet from Ratcliffe-on-Soar as 'in a sense a prayer for justice' (Turner 1963: 121) had been vindicated!

David Mattingly emphasises the distinctiveness of the British tablets and suggests that 'they can be read as a transcript about the workings of Roman imperialism – with divine help being recruited to help subjects address some of its shortcomings'. Unlike the writers of <WT51> and Tab. Vindol. 344, these people, many of whom had Celtic names, did not have access to the Roman legal system. That accounts, perhaps, for them not being found in military locations.

Versnel suggests there is more in common between the British tablets and those found elsewhere in the empire. He defines 'prayers for justice' as:

> pleas addressed to a god or gods to punish a (mostly unknown) person who has wronged the author (by theft, slander, false accusations or magical action), often with the additional request to redress the harm suffered by the author (e.g. by forcing a thief to return a stolen object, or to publicly confess guilt).
>
> *(Versnel 2010: 278)*

In the light of this re-assessment of the British tablets, he offered his own translation of the very first tablet to be discovered in Britain in 1805 at the Lydney temple on the opposite side of the Severn to Uley and suggested it has the feeling of a prayer:

> To Divus Nodens. Silvanus is missing his ring. He has given half (of its worth) to Nodens. Let no one in the group to which Senicianus belongs live in good health until he brings (the object) to the temple of Nodens.
>
> *(Versnel 1991a: 84)*

With a much larger bank of words to draw on, Versnel also suggested in the tablet found in the amphitheatre in Caerleon that *tulit* be translated 'stolen' not 'worn' and *redimat* 'may he atone' or 'redeem' not 'get back', arguing 'this text is another example of juridical prayer' (Versnel 1991a: 85). His suggested translation reads:

> Mistress Nemesis, I give you (my!) cloak and shoes. Whoever has stolen them will not atone for it unless with his life, with his blood.
>
> *(Versnel 1991a: 85)*

He also suggested that the Kelvedon tablet was much closer to these prayers for justice and that the phrase *sanguine suo* 'can only mean "with his own blood", that is "with his health" or "with his life"' and so he suggested translating as follows:

> Whoever stole the property of Varenus, whether man or woman, let him pay for it with his own blood. [not 'pay in person' as had previously been suggested]. From the money that he or she (the thief) will pay back, half is given to Mercurius and Virtus.
>
> *(Versnel 1991a: 84)*

Like the Greek texts from first century BCE discovered in Cnidus, in south-western Asia Minor, these Latin texts follow the pattern of 'prayers for justice' (Versnel 1991a: 87–90; Versnel 2010: 323).

Many of the tablets in Britain date from the second to fourth centuries and are like similar tablets found around the Mediterranean world, not least those deposited in a well in Herod's palace in Caesarea Maritima (Gleason 1998; Burrell 2016) and in Jerusalem (Daniel and Sulimani 2009). As Roger Tomlin comments:

> There is thus a remarkable similarity of atmosphere, one might almost call it, in these texts found in the Aegean, on the Danube and in Italy, in southern Spain and in southern Britain . . . the petitioner resorted to his local deity, albeit in a way which would not have been unfamiliar to another petitioner hundreds of miles – and even hundreds of years – distant.
>
> *(Tomlin 1988: 62f.)*

Writing his prayer in an old Roman cursive script in 150–275 CE, Solinus honours the divinity and majesty of the goddess and, like so many others, displays an awareness of the strata of Roman society, men and women, slaves and free:

> Solinus to the goddess Sulis Minerva, I give to your divinity (and) majesty (my) bathing tunic and cloak. Do not allow sleep or health to him who has done me wrong, whether man or woman, whether slave or free, unless he reveals himself and brings those goods to your temple . . . his children or his . . . and (?) who . . . to him also . . . sleep or [health] . . . cloak and the rest, unless they bring those things to your temple.
>
> *(Tab. Sulis 32)*

For Paul, this is the very stratification in Roman society that the good news of Jesus subverts: 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3:28; cf. 1 Cor. 12:13 and Col. 3:11).

Another person depositing their prayer in the sacred spring at the temple to Sulis Minerva in Bath is sure that the thief can only redeem the situation by giving their blood:

> To Minerva the goddess Sulis I have given the thief who has stolen my hooded cloak, whether slave or free, whether man or woman. He is not to buy back this gift unless with his own blood.
>
> *(Tab. Sulis 65)*

Docilinus takes much the same kind of prayer to Mercury in the Temple at Uley (see Figures 16.9a and 16.9b):

> To the god Mercury (from) Docilinus . . . Varianus and Peregrina and Sabinianus who have brought evil harm on my beast (*iumentum*) and are . . . I ask you that you drive them to the greatest death, and do not allow them health or sleep unless they redeem from you what they have administered to me.
>
> *(Uley 43)*

What is remarkable about all these tablets is the way they give a glimpse into what ordinary everyday people were thinking as they brought their prayers to their gods. The altars in the temple precinct around the sacred well at Bath and the hundreds of animal bones from the sacrifices at the temple to Mercury in Uley are a reminder that these prayers were shared in a context of sacrifice. Solinus and the writer of Tab. Sulis 65 would have recognised that when Paul uses the language of redemption and speaks of the blood of Christ, he is not using theological jargon. His language would have been familiar to them, as it would have been throughout the empire:

> For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith.
>
> *(Rom. 3:22–25)*

A retributive justice is sought in these prayers. The wrong-doer is in debt and owes not just the goods they have stolen but their life and health and blood. When Jesus teaches his disciples about prayer, he quite explicitly distances himself from the way the Romans pray. Perhaps it was this kind of vindictive prayer with its formulaic phrases oft repeated that Jesus had in mind:

> When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles [Romans] do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 'Pray then in this way: . . . forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors'.
>
> *(Matt. 6:7–8 and 12)*

As if that is not enough, he presses the point home: 'For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses' (Matt. 14–15). Docilinus and so many others who prayed prayers for justice in Uley, Bath, Caerleon and elsewhere would recognise the very different way taught by Jesus when he said, 'when someone takes your coat (*tunicam tuam*), you should give your cloak (*pallium* as in the Caerleon prayer for justice) as well' (Matt. 5:40). To read the New Testament through their eyes is to realise how much Jesus and his followers challenged the world they were used to, offering a different understanding of prayer and redemption.

(a)

(b)

Figures 16.9a and b Photo and sketch of a lead tablet in which Docilinus prays to the god Mercury at Uley. Oval 84mm × 98mm. Uley 43. Photograph ©The Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents and the British Museum

Conclusion

The story of Roman Britain from Julius Caesar to the Pax Romana of Trajan and Hadrian unfolds as the Herodian dynasty takes power, the events narrated in the New Testament take place and the books of the New Testament come to be written. The issues of empire and occupation are much the same on the north-western as on the eastern frontier. To visit archaeological sites in Roman Britain is to touch the social and political world of the lands of the Bible. It is in reading the prayers of those who prayed simple, powerful yet vindictive prayers for justice that it is possible to imagine the impact Jesus' teaching on prayer and forgiveness had on people just like them. It is in reading of everyday life in a fort on the north-western frontier that it is possible to touch the lives of the very Roman soldiers, centurions and their families who appear in the pages of the New Testament and of those who were among the first readers of the New Testament. It is in reading what slaves and freedmen, soldiers and civilians, traders and merchants wrote in their letters, and their legal and financial documents that it is possible for the very first time to experience in Roman Britain the contemporaries of Paul. In London we encounter the full force of a Roman economy and social order founded on honour and patronage, trade and commerce, money and debt that the first readers of the New Testament knew so well. It is not just the detail, it is the experiencing of what they wrote with their own hand that enables us to undertake a 'thought experiment' and read the New Testament in Roman Britain.

Notes

1 Bailey 2008, 2011; Barclay 1996; Carter 2008; Crossan and Reed 2001, 2009; Esler 1994; Horsley 1997; Malina 1993, 2001; Neyrey and Stewart 2008; Oakes 2002; Pritchard and Page 2008; Reed 2007; Theissen 1993; Vermes 2010; Walker 2009, 2014; Wright 1992.

2 I have drawn on David Mattingly's chronology of Roman Britain (Jones and Mattingly 1990: 73f.; Mattingly 2007: 97f.) which is entirely dependent on Tacitus, Suetonius and Cassio Dio; I have drawn on chronologies that give a similar credence to the New Testament documents, while recognising that all dates given are necessarily approximate (Bruce 1990: 92–5; Pritchard and Page 2008: 170–3).

3 Myers 1988; Theissen 1993, 2007; Horsley 1997, 2012; Crossan and Reed 2001, 2009; Crossan 2007; Carter 2006; Portier-Young 2011.

4 Gager 1975; Malina 1993, 2001; Esler 1994, 2000, 2014; Elliott 1995; Neyrey and Stewart 2008; Oakes 2002, 2009; Bailey 2008, 2011; Evans 2012.

5 The following description of and references to the Bloomberg tablets are based on Tomlin 2016. Excavated by the Museum of London Archaeology, they will go on display at the Bloomberg LP European headquarters. Tablets are identified using the publication catalogue reference number <W(riting)T(ablet) number>.

6 The following description of and references to the Vindolanda tablets are based on *Vindolanda Tablets Online*; *Vindolanda Tablets Online II*; and Bowman 2003. On display at Vindolanda and in the British Museum, 735 of the texts are in the public domain. Tablets are identified using the convention in *Vindolanda Tablets Online II* (accessed 25 July 2016) Tab(ellae) Vind(olanda) number.

7 The following description of and references to the so-called curse tablets are based on Tomlin 1988; Woodward and Leach 1993; and 'Curse Tablets from Roman Britain' 2002. They are on display in Bath, the British museum and in various Roman museums south of Nottingham. They are identified using the convention in Tomlin 1988: 'Tab(ellae) Sulis number' and with reference to their place of origin and appropriate number as in Curse Tablets of Roman Britain http://curses.csad.ox.ac.uk/ (accessed 25 July 2016).

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17

SEX AND SEXUAL RENUNCIATION I

Teresa M. Shaw

Overview

Recent scholarly assessments of sexuality, sexual relations, and sexual renunciation in early Christianity are part of a larger and very lively interdisciplinary discussion that is currently shaping research in classical studies, religion, anthropology, cultural studies, and other fields. The key methodological and topical questions in this discussion arise from contemporary scholarship in gender studies and the history of the body, as well as feminist, social, and critical theory. Broadly speaking, one could say that current research related to sexuality and focusing on ancient Christianity is characterized by an interest in both historical/social reconstructions as well as the examination of ideology and rhetoric, and how these relate to issues of authority and power. Christian argumentation and practices cannot be understood apart from the broader cultural contexts of the late ancient Mediterranean. It is not enough simply to summarize contemporary Jewish or pagan moral teaching as 'background' for Christianity. Rather, Christian texts, their authors, and their subjects embody and express cultural contexts and social expectations that are not limited to one religious tradition. Thus scholars are interested not only in explicating the overt theological argument or practical instructions of a text but also in accounting for the logic of its context in, for example, contemporary moral theory, medical models, systems of authority, and gender constructions.

In this chapter I will first highlight some of the theoretical and methodological concerns that have distinguished recent scholarly analyses, and then briefly describe current discussions of sexuality in late ancient medical theory and moral philosophy. Next I will turn to the textual evidence for late ancient Judaism and earliest Christianity in order to identify and characterize some of the ancient concerns related to sexual behavior as well as some of the questions of modern research. The remainder of the chapter will trace aspects of early Christian discourses of sexuality to the beginning of the fifth century, focusing in particular on debates about perfectionism and rigorism, the goodness of creation and the ideal body as these relate to gender and sexual desire, the value and role of marriage, the construction and use of categories of gender deviance and conformity, and the developing ideology of virginity.

Issues of theory and method

Much recent historical and critical analysis of issues relating to sexuality shares an important assumption with the broader study of the 'history of the body': that the human body, and therefore its behaviors and the disciplines applied to it, is inextricably part of culture and society. Susan Bordo has written:

> Over the past hundred and fifty years, under the influence of a variety of cultural forces, the body has been forced to vacate its long-term residence on the nature side of the nature/culture duality and encouraged to take up residence, along with everything else that is human, within culture.
>
> *(Bordo 1993: 33)*

This simple assertion has far-reaching implications for the way one approaches historical and theological texts. If we accept that the body is not a thing with models and meanings that are both knowable and universally applicable, and if we assert that rather 'the body we experience and conceptualize is always *mediated* by constructs, associations, images of a cultural nature' (Bordo 1993: 35), then as historians we must avoid claims and pronouncements that remove bodily experience and behaviors from the web of culture, ideology, and social identity.

These considerations characterize contemporary scholarship on sexuality in various historical periods, including the late ancient Mediterranean and early Christianity. A study of sexual behavior in antiquity would be suspect if it isolated the biological and physiological processes, the legal pronouncements concerning marriage and acceptable or forbidden sexual relationships, the social roles of male and female, or the ethical and theological discourses that claimed and prescribed morality. Even the reproductive processes and the biological aspects of sex—for example the biological differences between male and female—cannot be taken as fixed, neutral, or natural categories untouched by cultural factors. As much research on ancient medicine and in particular its representation of the female body (Rousselle 1983; Gourevitch 1984; Hanson 1990, 1991; Laqueur 1990; Dean-Jones 1991, 1994; King 1997) has shown, the biological differences between male and female, even if recognized as somehow based in nature, are 'culturally mediated and historical,' as biology itself is a 'socially mediated . . . classificatory system by which experiences are organized' (Turner 1984: 28). Thus sexuality is not simply a matter of bodily erotic expression and response; it is also 'inscribed on persons . . . by the exterior discourse of sexual ideology' (Turner 1984: 227, 1992: 41).

As others have noted, these assertions, and indeed the growth of body history as a distinct field, owe much to the influence of feminist analysis and criticism. In particular, twentieth-century feminists early on pointed out the relationship between the gendered body, dominance, and social power. They argued as well that cultural, political, and social forces were responsible for the sexual roles that are presented as 'natural' categories within dominant ideologies and institutions (Stanton 1992b: 16; Bordo 1993: 17; Richlin 1997: 18; Skinner 1997: 13). The insistence on the interrelationship of power, ideology, culture, and sexual roles is related to what has become since the 1970s a common terminological distinction between 'sex' and 'gender.' Stated simply, 'sex' refers to the biological or physiological categories while 'gender' refers to the cultural or social categories by which 'maleness' and 'femaleness' are constructed and interpreted. The distinction between sex and gender is useful for thinking about the relationship between bodies and culture, and especially for calling into question the reductionist equation of biological sex with sexual roles and hierarchy as 'natural' facts. It makes the point that there is no sexual 'identity' constituted outside the realm of culture, social relations, power, and hierarchies. But many scholars have seen the inadequacy and limits of an analysis built on these two categories. For one thing, it leaves 'biology' as an unexamined or natural 'given,' rather than itself a product of cultural and historical forces (Turner 1984: 28; Laqueur 1990: 11–13). Moreover, as Moira Gatens argues, the distinction between sex and gender allows the body to stand as a neutral category, thus masking the fundamentally 'sexed' status of the human body (Gatens 1996: 3–20). Finally, some theorists have noted a tendency for 'gender' to become a substitute for 'women' or 'female,' thus perpetuating the categories feminists and other theorists seek to dismantle (e.g., B. Martin 1994: 104–110).

The writings of French philosopher Michel Foucault and others in his school have had a riveting and controversial impact on the study of sex and sexual renunciation in late antiquity since the mid 1990s. While Foucault's ethical theories and writing on the relationship between power, knowledge,

and subjectivity were important enough, it is due to a seeming detour in his work that the spotlight shifted to ancient sexuality. As Foucault himself explains it, he realized after writing the first volume of his *History of Sexuality* in 1976 that in order to continue with his project of studying 'the modes according to which individuals are given to recognize themselves as sexual subjects,' he needed to turn to the ancient western world, to the period between classical Greece and early Christianity, asking the question, 'how, why, and in what forms was sexuality constituted as a moral domain?' (Foucault 1985: 5, 10).

Let me describe briefly just three aspects of Foucault's influence, as well as some of the criticisms of his work, that have been particularly important among historians of antiquity. In doing so, I do not mean to suggest that Foucault is the only thinker fueling scholarship and theory on ancient sexuality, but I hope to tease out several key topics in the current scholarly discussion while outlining Foucault's approach. First, Foucault provides a vocabulary for analyzing ethics and the ethical discourse of ancient texts, especially as related to 'the care of the self' or ascetic techniques. Foucault distinguishes between four aspects of ethics: the ethical substance (what is worked on), the mode of subjection (what motivates people), asceticism ('the self-forming activity'), and the telos or goal (Foucault 1983: 238–239). Using this schema, he argues for a dramatic difference between pagan and Christian ethics. Although Foucault died before publishing a substantial treatment of his thesis, he suggested the direction of his theory in different contexts. For instance, Foucault argued in *The Care of the Self* that in the pagan writers of the first two centuries CE (such as Musonius Rufus and Plutarch) one detects a greater problematization of sexual behavior, a more negative judgment of pederasty, and a higher valuation of the marriage relationship than in earlier Greek sources (Foucault 1986).

Beyond that, Foucault suggested that Christianity and the Christian moral code represented 'a profoundly altered ethics,' with its emphasis on sex as evil and its glorification of self-examination (the asceticsm), obedience (the mode of subjection), and purity (the telos) gained through self-renunciation (Foucault 1986: 235–240, 1983: 241–243). The desire to identify neatly, to put a finger on what is different about Christianity, what separates Christian practice and thought from its pagan (or, we should add—as Foucault did not—Jewish) neighbors is not, of course, unique to Foucault. Especially in the area of sexual practice and sexual morality, the urge to set off Christianity has a long history, both among its apologists and its detractors, ancient and modern. Regarding Foucault, many scholars, even those acknowledging his influence, have found his pronouncements to be a little too neat. David Cohen and Richard Saller, for example, have shown that when Foucault identifies a difference between classical Greek and second-century Roman cultures on the value attached to marital union, he ignores the long history of both condemnation and valorization of marriage. They show that he misreads Musonius, Plutarch, and Pliny whose praise of marriage and of wives leaves sexual hierarchy and traditional subjugation of women, even blatant misogyny, intact and operative (Cohen and Saller 1994: 36, 44–55). Others have argued for at least a modification of Foucault's assessment of the impact of Christianity, with consideration of other historical factors or texts (e.g., Clark 1988; Brown 1990: 480). While Foucault's terminology and his attention both to the problem of desire and the 'technologies of the self' in ancient philosophy and medicine have manifestly shaped the way scholars approach the topic of sex and sexual renunciation in antiquity, his historical method and conclusions have not gone without serious challenge.

This leads to a second area of discussion surrounding Foucault's work. As numerous critics have noted, Foucault gave almost no attention to the lives, desires, and ethical strategies of women in his *History*. Indeed, in a telling fashion, Foucault identifies the four 'axes' of experience, in which the ethical subject is shaped, as: the relation to one's body, one's wife, boys, and truth (Foucault 1985: 32, 1986). Discussing this passage, Page Du Bois (who otherwise finds much to praise in Foucault's 'defamiliarizing' of the past) observes that Foucault's analysis of classical Greek culture 'takes for granted the subordination and subjection of women,' and assumes 'that women, like boys, diet, and philosophy, were always merely occasions for the philosophical subject's mastery of himself' (DuBois 1998: 86–87, 90). Amy Richlin states bluntly that the *History of Sexuality* 'presents us with

a vision of ancient sexual systems that is even more male-centered than what his sources present' (Richlin 1998: 148, 1997: 25). Others have argued that Foucault's denial of women's subjectivity amounts to more than the kind of 'oversight' that is all too familiar in historical scholarship. Rather, his failure to consider gender relations in spite of his long interest in power and knowledge is not only an inexcusable and unredeemable flaw (Cohen and Saller 1994; Richlin 1998), it in fact exposes a fundamental problematic of his notion of power. Catharine MacKinnon writes, 'when he misses gender, he misses how power is organized sexually, hence socially' (MacKinnon 1992: 128).

Finally, Foucault's claim that 'sexuality' is a modern construct, a notion of a separate, knowable, and decipherable sexual identity that developed in discourses and institutions particular to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Foucault 1978), has generated both affirmation and critique (e.g., Halperin *et al.* 1990b; Laqueur 1990; Halperin 1994; Boyarin 1995a; Brooten 1996; Richlin 1998). The companion argument, developed particularly by David Halperin, is that the ancient Greeks had no 'sexuality' in the modern sense, so that the modern categories of heterosexual and homosexual are applied anachronistically to the ancient world, where social categories of active and passive were more important (Halperin *et al.* 1990b: 5; Halperin 1994). The far-reaching implication here, of course, is that categories of sexual identity are 'denaturalized,' that the past is 'defamiliarized,' and the present is 'demystified' (Stanton 1992b: 4; DuBois 1998: 90; Larmour *et al.* 1998b: 13).

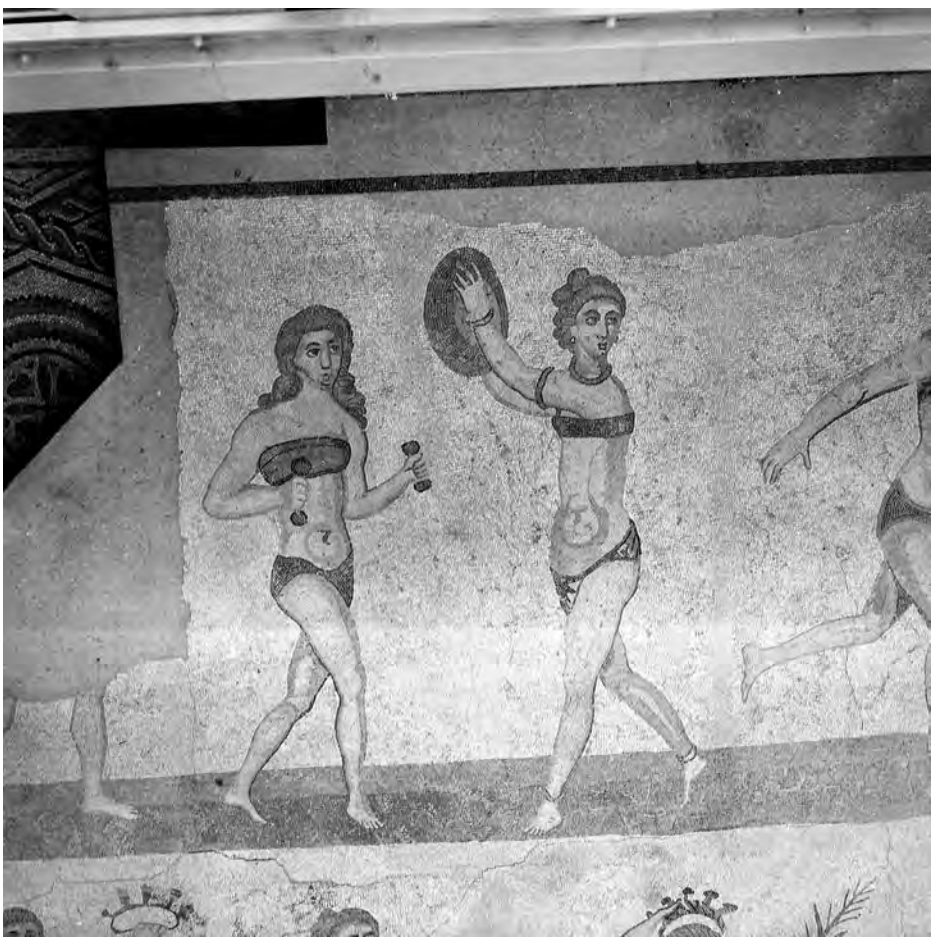

Figure 17.1 Mosaic dated *c.* 350 CE. Piazza Armerina, the Villa Casale, Sicily. Women Doing Sports: Exercising with Weights. Copyright: Marie-Anne Lapadu/Roger-Viollet/The Image Works

This is the language of a constructionist or historicist approach which looks to differences, contingencies, change, and discontinuities in history and culture, emphasizing that sexuality, desire, even gender are the constructions of social, institutional, and cultural norms and discourses. Such a vision may free up the future by freeing the past (Halperin 1994: 34; DuBois 1998: 96–102). In contrast, others have looked for continuities, shared experience, common identities. Thus MacKinnon and Richlin point to the historical stability of misogyny and sexual hierarchy, and Gatens notes that appeals to the 'construction' of gender and hierarchy ahistorically mask the 'historical fact' of the social hierarchy based on sex (MacKinnon 1992: 123; Gatens 1996: 11; Richlin 1997: 26–33). On the one hand, these territorial claims and seemingly theoretical contrasts are important, even crucial, for careful analysis of the body in history. On the other, as many have noted, they create what may be artificial boundaries and scholarly impasses by seeming to force a choice between the old dualistic categories of culture and nature, social forces or biology (Porter 1991: 220–221; Turner 1992: 49, 61; Richlin 1993: 280–281; Boyarin 1994: 236–237).

These theoretical and methodological considerations have shaped current research on early Christianity in relation to the kinds of questions we ask, the vocabulary we use, and the way we negotiate texts and their representations, as will be evident in the remainder of this discussion. Thus important recent studies have tried to decipher the rhetoric surrounding and evidence for same-sex relationships (Boswell 1980; Satlow 1994; Boyarin 1995a; Brooten 1996; Hallett 1997) and the construction of masculinity and femininity (e.g., Gleason 1990, 1995; Laqueur 1990). Other scholars have shown how gender categories are used rhetorically to praise or condemn by associating an individual, regardless of his or her sex, with gender deviance, passivity, and hence femininity (Burrus 1991, 1995). Examinations of the problem of desire in Christian discourse (Brown 1990; Miller 1993; Brakke 1995), the role of body and theology (Brown 1985, 1988; Clark 1986; Bynum 1995; Shaw 1997), the historical reconstruction of female piety and the rhetoric of virginity (Clark 1981; Cameron 1989; Elm 1994; Cooper 1996; Shaw 1998), and the collection of texts and cross-cultural analysis of bodily behaviors (Wimbush 1990; Wimbush and Valantasis 1995) have characterized contemporary scholarship.

Sexuality in the Graeco-Roman world

When we turn to the evidence from the Mediterranean world in the first and second centuries, the world in which Christianity developed and was to flourish, there are features of the social and cultural landscape that help to orient us to the assumptions, models, and concerns surrounding sexual behavior and renunciation. Before focusing on Christian discussions, it is important to consider, for example, the contemporary and influential philosophical instructions and musings as well as the physiological or medical constructs of the human body and sexual processes, both of which gave undeniable shape to Christian practice and discourse. Several recent studies have taken this approach (e.g., Rousselle 1983; Foucault 1985, 1986; Brown 1987, 1988; D. Martin 1995; Shaw 1998).[1] A fundamental characteristic of late ancient philosophy and medicine is the extent to which the two disciplines are intertwined in their shared concerns with regimen, health, and happiness, as the second-century philosopher and moralist Plutarch observed (*Moralia* 122c–e). This intertwining of concerns points to what I and others have argued is a second fundamental characteristic, namely, that in spite of much dualistic language about soul and body, and a tendency among modern interpreters to take dualistic thinking as a historical 'given,' the relationship between body and soul in philosophy, medicine, and ascetic practice is complex and inextricably interdependent (Brown 1988: 26–27, 222–240; D. Martin 1995: 3–37; Shaw 1998: 27–78). For example, the prominent physician Galen (*c.* 129–200 CE), whose writings had lasting influence through late ancient, Byzantine, and Islamic medical traditions, wrote that the character of the soul is affected by diet, exercise, and habits, and the constitution of the body (which is dependent to some extent on regimen) leads to either intelligence or foolishness (*de sanitate tuenda* 1.8; *Quod animi* 4).

While the philosophical and medical literature of the period is by no means uniform, one can detect general or common themes and concerns related to both gender and sex roles as well as the

nature and value of sexual relations. These are important in no small measure because they help to brighten the shadowy corners of the 'logic' of Christian teaching and debates. Although the current body of scholarship is large and varied, I will briefly summarize two issues: the medical representation of male and female bodies and its effect on gender differentiation, and the question of the benefits or dangers of sexual activity. As should be clear from the earlier discussion of some of the theoretical issues in the history of the body, medical representations and description cannot be taken at face value. Rather, medicine and medical models reflect cultural categories and social institutions. This is dramatically evident in the ways in which ancient medicine depicts male and female bodies. Recent studies have shown that ancient medicine, like any other part of ancient culture, is in the service of ideology (e.g., Lloyd 1964, 1983; Hanson 1990; Dean-Jones 1991). For example, one commonplace found in literature and philosophy as well as in medical discourse (particularly Galen) is that male bodies possess more innate heat than female bodies, heat and cold being two of the four basic qualities of bodies in the Galenic scheme, along with wetness and dryness. Of course heat is the superior quality and that which allows male bodies to develop to perfection, while the colder female body languishes in a kind of defective and inverted state, in incomplete imitation of the male.[2]

Thomas Laqueur has used this image to support his argument that 'sex' in antiquity was more a fluid continuum from feminine to masculine *genders* than the modern concept of two distinct and permanent biological *sexes*. Thus he argues that what mattered was gender roles and social hierarchies (Laqueur 1990). While Laqueur's thesis may be rightly challenged as 'reductionist' (King 1997: 621; Richlin 1997: 29), his 'one sex model' does point to the sense of fluidity between masculine and feminine types that informs rhetoric and physiognomy, both of which regularly use classifications of masculine and feminine irrespective of the maleness or femaleness of their subject (Gleason 1990, 1995). Further, this sense of fluidity helps us to think about the Christian ascetic texts that urge the female to employ physical techniques such as fasting and modifying her appearance in order to become 'manly' or 'male' (Shaw 1997, 1998: 220–253). In any case, it should be clear that the valuation of heat and cold, masculine and feminine, works to support gender hierarchy and the subordination of women.

Another feature of the medico-philosophical discourse on sexual relations is what scholars have identified as a kind of problematizing in terms of both desire itself as well as the effects of sexual activity on the body (e.g., Rousselle 1983; Foucault 1986; Brown 1988; Pinault 1992; D. Martin 1995). Thus too much sex or having sex when the condition of the body is not optimal can bring disease or exhaustion, and sex deprives the body of vital spirit or pneuma. On the other hand, intercourse is a remedy for some diseases or conditions, and most writers seem to assume that the healthy male or female will be sexually active.

There is evidence, however, of at least a debate on the value of sexual activity, and some have argued that these debates hint at growing pagan interest in the practice of sexual abstinence. Here the physician Soranus' *Gynecology* provides important details. Although Soranus gives information and instructions concerning proper techniques for conception, healthful pregnancy and childbirth, and the care of infants—and thus writes to some extent in the service of standard sex roles (Rousselle 1983: 35)—he also argues that permanent virginity is a healthy state and that while menstruation and pregnancy are of course essential for conception and the continuation of generation, they are not in themselves healthy for the female body (Soranus, *Gynaikeia* 1.27–32; 42). This position is in striking contrast to the previous tradition in Greek medicine, which assumed that the healthy woman was the sexually active and, perhaps more important, the procreative woman (Gourevitch 1984: 96; Hanson 1990: 330–334; Pinault 1992: 129). It is also significant that Soranus refers to a debate on the topic, and says that some argue that the body actually becomes ill through desire (*Gynaikeia* 1.30), and many understood the excretion of seed to be harmful to health. Further, although Soranus makes the case for the value of permanent virginity, he concedes that intercourse is necessary for procreation (*Gynaikeia* 1.32). Jody Rubin Pinault and Aline Rousselle have both observed that these passages in Soranus indicate the possibility that Roman pagans were practicing sexual abstinence in this period, though Pinault doubts that it is likely Roman girls were taking up lifelong virginity. Rousselle is more

Figure 17.2 Terracotta relief of a childbirth scene from Ostia, *c.* second century CE. Copyright Cologne Digital Archaeology Laboratory. See permalink: http://arachne.unikoeln.de/item/marbilder/687464. Photo B. Malter

willing to draw out the connections between the pagan interest in semen retention and the health benefits of abstinence, and the Christian praise of celibacy (Rousselle 1983: 95–102; Pinault 1992).

The medical debate on sexual activity and abstinence is connected to discussions in moral philosophy on the same topic. One of the best examples is found in Musonius Rufus (*c.* 30–*c.* 101 CE), who writes that excessive indulgence in sexual pleasures is shameful and shows a lack of the self-control so prized among Stoic philosophers (such as Musonius) and others. He argues that husbands as well as wives should practice intercourse only within marriage, and even then only for the purpose of procreation, not merely for pleasure (*Discourse* 12). Several recent studies have emphasized that in this period desire itself was problematized. While desire is a natural and physiological process that impels humans to procreate (e.g., Musonius, *Discourse* 14; Galen, *de usu partium* 14), it also threatens the human body and soul with weakness, distraction, and disease (Rousselle 1983: 13–63; Foucault 1986: 104–144; Nussbaum 1994; D. Martin 1997).

> Not the smallest part of wantoness exists in the sexual pleasures, as those who are wanton need various little darlings, not only lawful ones but also unlawful, and not only female but also male—chasing one love or another, and not being satisfied with those who are available but aiming at those who are exotic, demanding shameful embraces—all of which is a great indictment against humans. Those who are not wanton or evil should consider sexual pleasures justified only within marriage and when accomplished for the purpose of procreation of children, because this is lawful. But mere pleasure hunting is unjust and unlawful, even if it is within marriage.
>
> *(Musonius Rufus,* Discourse *12; trans. T. Shaw)*

Jewish and New Testament perspectives on sexuality

Jewish perspectives

Another important characteristic of the current research on sexual behavior and ideology in the early Christian period is the consideration of Jewish teaching and practice, and especially the question of Jewish asceticism.

Against those who would separate Jewish piety from 'asceticism,' defined negatively as body-hating dualism, Steven Fraade has argued that an 'ascetic tension' exists within pre-rabbinic and rabbinic Judaism. This is exemplified in certain pseudepigraphal works, by Philo's advocacy of ascetic self-discipline and glowing descriptions of the ascetic Therapeutae community, by the evidence for the ascetic lifestyle and worldview of the Essenes, and the practice of Nazirite vows (Fraade 1986). Fraade advocates a broader and less pejorative approach to ascetic practices in Christianity, Judaism, and Hellenistic philosophy and religion, one that would recognize that all of these 'are interconnected and not simply isolated and heretical embarrassments' (Fraade 1986: 261). Regarding sexual asceticism specifically, Daniel Boyarin has made the case that, while many scholars including Peter Brown picture Judaism in the first century as affirming of sexual expression and pleasure within marriage, both Paul and Philo show vividly that in first-century Judaism 'sexuality had become . . . problematic.' He argues that Paul and Philo should be considered together as part of a 'pessimistic' strain within Hellenistic Judaism which, in the second century, the rabbis sought to control with a more optimistic affirmation of sexuality, procreation, and marriage (Boyarin 1992, 1995b). The implications of Fraade's and Boyarin's work for the study of early Christian ideas and practices is that they challenge long-held dichotomies between 'Christian' and 'Jewish,' dichotomies that often are maintained on the basis of historical generalizations about whole groups. As Boyarin points out, it makes more sense to consider Paul and Philo together as representatives of 'Hellenistic Judaisms' than to divide them anachronistically as 'Christian' and 'Jewish' (Boyarin 1992: 28–29, 1994: 13–15). This is not to suggest that differences between religious traditions are unimportant either now or in the past. But differences *within* one tradition may point to broader cultural tensions and points of contact, as Fraade's and Boyarin's work has shown.

New Testament perspectives

These considerations are of crucial importance as scholars confront the New Testament writings, which on the topic of sex are filled with tension, ambivalence, and evidence of outright debate. Because the scholarly literature is so vast, I will highlight only some of the New Testament passages dealing with sexual issues and then discuss two studies that are representative of recent scholarship in the field. The words attributed to Jesus in the canonical gospels represent in general a relativizing of family relationships that seems to fit with Jesus' teachings on detachment from worldly concerns and possessions. Jesus calls for his followers to recognize that their discipleship will bring division within families, that they must not love their parents, spouses, and children more than him (Matt. 10:35–37). Indeed, in the gospel of Luke, Jesus' words are quite strong, 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple' (Luke 14:26–27; see also Matt. 12:46–49, 19:16–30; Mark 3:31–35, 10:17–31; Luke 8:19–21, 11:27–28, 18:18–30). At the same time, he does not advocate the abolition of marriage but rather limits the grounds for legitimate divorce to *porneia* (fornication or sexual immorality) (Matt. 5:31–32; cf. Mark 10:10–12; Luke 16:18).

Besides the sayings in which Jesus seems to group familial relationships with wealth and material possessions as worldly distractions from discipleship, some sayings go further to suggest that freedom from marriage and sexual relationships either characterizes the kingdom of God or makes

one ready for the kingdom. In Matt. 19:10–12, in response to the question of whether it is better not to marry in order to avoid the moral problems attached to divorce and remarriage, Jesus makes rather enigmatic reference to those who are able 'to receive this saying' because they 'have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.' Even more dramatic are Jesus' words recorded in Luke 20:34–36:

> The children of this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection.
>
> *(cf. Matt. 22:30; Mark 12:25)*

While these sayings may reflect a radically eschatological orientation, they became normative for the lifestyle of groups of Christians who sought to actualize or speed the coming of the kingdom by their own sexual abstinence. As we shall see, disagreement over the necessity of marriage or abstinence continued from the first century through the early Christian centuries.

This is clear in the authentic letters of Paul as well as the pseudo-Pauline writings. Chapter 7 of the first letter to the Corinthians preserves an extended and controversial discussion of sexual issues, and is a key text for considering both Paul's concerns and the issues confronting early Christian communities. In it, Paul is responding to the sexual abstinence already being practiced in the Corinthian community and to the anxieties raised over issues such as the marriage or celibacy of those struggling against youthful sexual desire, conjugal rights, and the possibility of divorce. Several of the verses continue to be the subject of debate (see the sources cited in D. Martin 1995: 209–228). Paul seems to agree with his correspondents in Corinth that 'it is good for a man not to touch a woman,' but he

Figure 17.3 Image of a Christian family group. Gold and glass inset on cross, fourth century CE. Copyright Museo della Citta in Santa Giulia, Brescia

cautions that because of *porneia*, that is, because of the temptations to sexual immorality, it is better to marry. Further, he argues that the husband and wife should not renounce sexual intercourse except if they agree to do so for a limited time devoted to prayer. Otherwise, sexual abstinence may lead to temptation. In the same way, Paul observes, it is good for those who are unmarried to remain so. Yet if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for 'it is better to marry than to burn [i.e., with desire]' (1 Cor. 7:8–9). Paul also urges that in consideration of the 'present distress' and the shortness of time, married persons should remain married and not seek divorce, while unmarried persons should remain unmarried. Although he insists that this is not a commandment and that to marry is not sinful, his own opinion is that the unmarried state is better, more free from worldly anxieties (1 Cor. 7:10–40). While some have argued that Paul in these verses affirms marriage and marital sexual relations (D. Martin 1995: 209), Paul only affirms marriage as a protection against lust and burning desire for those who lack self-control. In fact, Paul does not here or anywhere even praise procreation as good (Boyarin 1995b: 473). These observations not only locate Paul in relation to trends within the cultures of the Mediterranean which we have discussed in moral philosophy and Judaism, they also suggest the ways in which later advocates of sexual abstinence may readily have appealed to the words of Paul (Boyarin 1995b; cf. Brown 1988: 53–57).

If the sayings attributed to Jesus and the letters of Paul witness to their ambivalence or aversion to marriage and sexual relations, in the pseudo-Pauline letters written decades after Paul's death the institution of marriage seems securely in place. Thus the assumption is that bishops and deacons would be married (1 Tim. 3:1–13) and households stable and hierarchically ordered (Eph. 5:21–33; Col. 3:18–4:1; Tit. 2:1–10). In contrast to Paul, the author of 1 Timothy insists that although women bear in some way the condemnation of Eve's deception and sin, they will be saved through the bearing of children (1 Tim. 2:11–14). Young widows should not remain single, as Paul may have preferred, but should remarry (1 Tim. 5:1–6). Moreover, the author warns against demon-inspired 'liars' who will come in the later times commanding abstinence from certain foods and condemning marriage. In anticipated rebuttal to such deceivers, the author affirms that everything created by God is good (1 Tim. 4.1–4). These letters thus point not only to a 'domestication' of Pauline teaching, but more importantly to a contentious debate about the value of marriage, certain types of food, and material creation itself.

Two recently published studies may serve as examples of the ways in which scholars have elucidated elements of the New Testament literature concerning sexuality by considering the larger cultural context and ideology. Bernadette Brooten, in *Love Between Women*, sets Paul's condemnation of female homoeroticism (Rom. 1:26–27) squarely in historical and cultural perspective first by elaborating the evidence for female same-sex relationships in antiquity using medical, astrological, and philosophical texts as well as erotic love spells and Jewish and Roman law. She argues not only that the ancients recognized female homoerotic relationships, but also (against Foucault's and Halperin's theses) that such relationships were categorized and medicalized as reflecting permanent sexual identities (Brooten 1996: 160–162). Moreover, Brooten writes convincingly against scholarly claims (e.g., Boswell 1980) that homosexual relationships in themselves were not condemned in the late ancient Roman world or in the Christian church (Brooten 1996: 11), demonstrating that the hostility to both female and male same-sex relationships was based on the pervasive and fundamentally gendered categories of active/passive and natural/unnatural. She thus demonstrates that when Paul categorizes sexual relations as either natural or unnatural, he does so 'based on the assumption widely shared within the Roman world that nature calls for men to be superordinate and active and for women to be subordinate and passive' (Brooten 1996: 192).[3]

In his study *The Corinthian Body* (1995), Dale Martin argues that within the Corinthian communal body we can detect two prominent ideologies of the human body. One group (including Paul) saw the body primarily in terms of its vulnerability to pollution, penetration, and defilement; this group thus expressed fears about eating food offered to idols and having sexual relations with outsiders.

The other group, which Martin identifies with 'the Strong,' represents in general a higher social status and holds a fundamentally hierarchical understanding of the body, expressing less concern with issues of pollution. Martin elucidates the spectrum of meanings attached to 'spirit,' 'flesh,' and 'body,' as he examines medical and philosophical literature concerning desire, sexual physiology, and diet in order to identify ancient constructions of the human body that lay behind community discord. He also makes good use of contemporary feminist and ideological criticism in his conclusions. Martin argues finally that Paul chooses to reinforce the social hierarchy between male and female rather than to call for the kinds of social restructuring he advocates elsewhere (D. Martin 1995: 198, 248). Paul's conservatism rests in large part, Martin shows, on his conception of a fundamental difference between the 'stuff' of male and female bodies and his assumption not only that the male stuff was superior, but also that the female body was naturally more vulnerable to invasions and pollutions (thus explaining the arguments over veiling) (D. Martin 1995: 229–248).

Martin and Brooten exemplify the ways in which recent studies related to sexual behavior and Christian identity in antiquity not only must take into account factors within the broader cultures and discourses that help explain Christian formulations, but also use contemporary methodologies and are engaged in contemporary discussions of theoretical issues related to sexuality, gender constructions, hierarchy, and deviance. These studies are also important because in setting particular historical problems within their context, they avoid a simple teleological approach that employs aspects of pagan and Jewish culture and learning merely as the warm-up act or backdrop for Christian teaching and practice.

In the space remaining in this chapter, I would like to trace two broad features that distinguish the Christian discourse of sexuality in the literature from the second to the early fifth centuries. Both have already been mentioned in the previous discussion. First, there is constant tension between 'radical' Christian interpreters who understood sexual abstinence (along with other types of renunciation such as fasting) to be the distinguishing feature of the Christian life or even a requirement for the kingdom, and those who sought to defend the institution of marriage and (controlled) sexual relations against their detractors. Second, by the fourth century, an entire genre of literature and an accompanying theological framework grew up around the ideal of female virginity, as the practice of male and female monasticism became more institutionalized. In some ways, the second feature represents an uneasy compromise to the first.

Early Christian discourses of sexuality

Marriage or abstinence in early Christianity

The argument recorded in 1 Timothy 4 over the value of marriage was not a localized or limited debate. While it is obvious that most Christians continued to marry and raise families, it is also clear that some smaller groups of Christians distinguished themselves by their dedication to abstinence or *enkrateia*. These various groups are thus commonly called 'encratites,' although important distinctions in time, place, and teaching exist and need to be kept in mind (Chadwick 1960; Brown 1988: 83–102; Sfameni Gasparro 1991, 1995: 129). In general, the basic features of encratite Christianity include a rejection of marriage (more specifically procreation) as well as meat and wine in the diet, justified by an eschatological and protological orientation that links procreation and meat eating with the fall from paradise and with death, and thus links abstinence with a return to paradise and a regaining of the angelic condition of original creation. Scholars have noted that in this vision God as creator and indeed material creation itself are not evil. The dualistic aspect is not anthropological but eschatological (Van Eijk 1972: 212–219).

These general characteristics, then, appear in descriptions of Christian groups from the New Testament through the end of the late ancient period. In second- and third-century texts such as the

Acts of Thomas and the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, for example, the links between sexual purity and the kingdom are striking. In the *Acts of Thomas*, the apostle interrupts a newly married couple on their bridal bed and persuades them to 'abandon this filthy intercourse,' to raise spiritual children rather than worldly offspring. Convinced, the young bride announces that she now sits unveiled and unashamed (as Eve stood naked and unashamed in the garden before the fall). In a prayer that captures the ancient longing for the lost wholeness and shamelessness of first creation, the bridegroom declares his gratitude and hope 'that I may become again what I was' (11–15). Similarly, in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, the young Thecla rejects worldly marriage and faces the threat of execution after being converted by Paul, who preached 'Blessed are the bodies of virgins, for they shall be well pleasing to God, and shall not lose the reward of their purity' (*Acts of Paul and Thecla* 6). Paul's opponents criticize him for teaching that there is no resurrection unless one remains chaste and keeps the flesh pure (*Acts of Paul and Thecla* 12).

One of the reasons that the encratite position was so challenging is, of course, that it appealed to the ideals preached to all Christians: ideals of self-control, detachment from worldly pleasures and concerns, and dedication to the kingdom of God before any earthly commitment. These ideals, moreover, could be confidently argued from scripture, e.g., Luke 20:34–36 and 1 Corinthians 7 (Sfameni Gasparro 1991, 1995; Boyarin 1995b), and were the basis for the apologists' presentation of the superior morality of Christians (e.g., Justin Martyr, *Apology* 1.15, 1.28). The perceived threat came not only from the radical interpreters of Christian *enkrateia*, but also from some gnostic, Marcionite, and Manichaean observers who presented a more formidable critique of material creation itself (Van Eijk 1972: 217–219; Brown 1988: 87–121, 197–202). Thus the writings of the most prominent authors in the early period, in their discussions related to sexuality, exhibit a struggle to define the Christian life so as both to affirm marriage and creation and at the same time to praise sexual abstinence. They did so on the basis of two primary factors: the rhetorical distinction between marriage and virginity as 'the good' and 'the better' (Bailey 1959: 21–24) and the institutionalization and domestication of a Christian ascetic elite in the fourth century.

In the third book of his *Stomateis*, Clement of Alexandria (*c.* 160–*c.* 215) gives an early and lengthy defense of marriage against libertine and encratite detractors, in which he insists that the decision whether to marry or to remain in chastity must be a free choice. He claims that marriage is cooperation with creation and an opportunity for service, but notes that the purpose of marriage is procreation alone and that marriage still requires chastity and self-control. Nevertheless, Clement acknowledges that *enkrateia* is a powerful Christian ideal, not merely to struggle against desire, but 'not to experience desire at all,' a gift that is attainable only by the grace of God (*Stromateis*, 3.57–58, 66–79).

Virginity and paradise

Clement's relatively positive words concerning marriage are rarely matched in the fourth century, when the literature devoted to the praise and regulation of the disciplined ascetic life intensifies. Particularly in the many sources concerning female virginity,[4] the authors seem to pay only lip service to the value of marriage, noting that while it is a good, virginity is better. In fact, a standard topos in these texts is the 'woes of marriage,' the dramatic detailing of all the physical and emotional hardships of a life with husband and children. Still, underlying the language of 'good' and 'better' is the same tension identified in the New Testament texts, between ascetic rigorists and elite groups and the majority of married Christians, as well as the same questions concerning the goodness of creation and the value of procreation. The insistence on the goodness of marriage as a creation of God seems to have been a kind of litmus test for 'orthodoxy' in ascetic ideology, although some of the 'fathers' seem barely to have passed the test. Most notorious, perhaps, is Jerome (*c.* 342–420), whose meager

praise for marriage rested in the fact that marriage might produce more virgins (*Epistle* 22.20), and whose vehement rigorism in advocating sexual abstinence and fasting led to a very public and very nasty debate with the Roman monk Jovinian. Jovinian condemned Jerome's elitism as Manichaean and his hierarchical view of heavenly rewards as fundamentally against the gospel (Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*; Brown 1988: 366–386; Shaw 1998: 96–112, 234).

It is clear that at the end of the early Christian era, many of the thorny issues surrounding sexuality, particularly those at the heart of the theology of creation and paradise, remained. Although the contours of what might be condemned as 'heretical' views are visible, and the ideology of virginity allowed for both the glorification of angelic purity and the confirmation of material creation and God's approval of marriage, nevertheless the difficult issues remain. In closing, we might consider two grand visions of creation, the fall, sexuality, and paradise, one eastern and one western, that offer 'uneasy' solutions to the problem of embodiment.

In the east, Gregory of Nyssa (*c.* 335–394) understood virginity to be the first step on a freely chosen path from the corruption of the present life back toward the restoration of life in original creation: a genderless, passionless, marriageless, and immortal state in the image of God. While marriage and procreation were good gifts of a compassionate God with the purpose of continuing the human race, the promise of virginity became evident with the coming of Christ.[5]

> [Virginity] should be preferred by those who have intelligence, because it is stronger than the power of death. Bodily procreation—let no one be disgusted by this argument—is the origin not of life but of death for humans. For corruption has its beginning in birth, and those who have made an end of it (birth) have established in themselves through virginity the end point of death, by preventing it from advancing further through them. And, by setting themselves up as a boundary stone between death and life, they hinder its movement forward. If, then, death is unable to get past virginity, but reaches its end and dissolves in it, then it is clearly shown that virginity is stronger than death, and the body is rightly called incorruptible which is not working in the service of the life of corruption and which has not allowed itself to become an instrument of mortal succession. So in this the continuous sequence of corruption and dying is interrupted, which has existed in the interval from the first-formed human until the life of the one practicing virginity [Christ].
>
> *(Gregory of Nyssa,* On Virginity *14.1; trans. T. Shaw)*

In the west, Augustine (354–430), responding in part to Jerome's debates with Jovinian and to his own arguments with the Pelagians over free will and perfectionism, praised the married life in strong terms as a sacramental bond while acknowledging the superiority of virginity. In the concept of 'original sin' as Augustine was to formulate it, the original creation consisted of male and female bodies that would have performed sexual intercourse but without any accompanying lust or compulsion. After sin and the fall, however, humans lost free will, and the sexual act is unavoidably tainted with sinful concupiscence; moreover, sinfulness is passed from generation to generation. Augustine nevertheless refused to condemn procreation, and argued instead that the married couple would be forgiven the lustful sin attached to legitimate marital intercourse.[6]

Gregory and Augustine offer windows into the drama of early Christian theology and ascetic identity. Their visions of human perfection and corruption likewise crystalize for ancient Christianity the issues that we as contemporary historians and readers continue to fret about: the place of the body in culture and society; sexuality and identity; male and female bodies; and the nature of gender itself.

Figure 17.4 Fresco of Adam and Eve from the Catacomb of St Peter and St Marcellinus in Rome, chamber 13, from the fourth century CE. Photo of the Pontifical Commission of Sacred Archaeology

Notes

1 Others have examined astrological and 'magical' sources, as well as literary sources such as fiction or poetry, in order to draw out evidence for the cultural climate around sexual behavior. See, for example, Brooten 1996; Goldhill 1995.
2 The scholarship on this topic is substantial, and it should be noted that not all ancient writers agree on the relative heat of male and female bodies. See the discussion in Shaw 1998: 54, 64–68; Lloyd 1964; Galen, *de usu partium* 14.6.
3 For related studies of ancient sexual types based on the distinction between active and passive, see Boyarin 1995a; Satlow 1994; Gleason 1990; Halperin 1994; Foucault 1985, 1986.
4 For references and discussion, see Shaw 1998, 1997; Copper 1996; Elm 1994; Brown 1988, 1985; Reuther 1974; Clark 1977, 1995; Van Eijk 1972; Camelot 1952.
5 See the texts cited in Shaw 1998: 187–196.
6 See the texts conveniently collected in Clark 1996.

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18

SEX AND SEXUAL RENUNCIATION II

Developments in research since 2000[1]

Elizabeth A. Castelli

In the last few decades, the history of sexuality has flourished as a field, and there now exists a robust archive of scholarly writing spanning a vast array of geographical and cultural locations, historical periods, and theoretical frameworks (for a survey of antiquity, see, for example, Masterson *et al.* 2015). The study of sexuality in early and late ancient Christianity is no exception, and the last fifteen years or so have been especially generative of thoughtful investigations into the construction of sex and sexuality in the first several centuries of the common era.

One cannot explore the history of sexuality in antiquity without also engaging with a series of other histories—the history of the body (Miller 2009; Castelli 2013; Kuefler 2015), the history of gender ideologies (Gaca 2003; Cuffel 2007; Petrey 2016), and the competing histories of ascendant and declining religious communities and practices. This chapter begins with a supplementary discussion of the theoretical frames that have shaped the history of sexuality (especially the work of Michel Foucault and Thomas Laqueur) and the addition of queer theory to the conversation. It then seeks to point the reader toward topics and themes in recent scholarship that broaden our understanding of the history of sexuality and sexual renunciation in the first centuries of the common era. These include new scholarship on the history of sexuality in late ancient Judaism; newly available (English translations of) sources in Syriac and Coptic that broaden the archive for the study of late ancient Christianity; emerging themes in the study of masculinity; and sex in the context of the institution of slavery.

Theoretical framings revisited and revised

The historical study of sexuality has, for the last several decades, been framed by debates over Michel Foucault's arguments in the first volume of his now-canonical *History of Sexuality*, which appeared in the late 1970s. In this slim volume, Foucault argued that *sexuality* should be understood as a modern category linked to a post-Enlightenment concept of the autonomous subject. That is, Foucault argued, prior to the nineteenth century (or so), no one *had* a sexuality in the sense that sexuality was part of one's identity. People did sexual things, of course, but these acts did not coalesce into a distinctive expression of who people were. Whereas a modern person might well routinely speak of his or her sexuality as an element of their social and personal identity—often as part of a litany of gender, race, class, etc.—this practice, Foucault argued, both has a history and should not be facilely projected onto other times and places, as though it were a natural and

transhistorical way of understanding human experience *tout court*. In short, for Foucault, sexuality is not something that one has but a discourse that speaks one into being.

Volumes two and three of the *History of Sexuality* appeared in print just shortly before Foucault's death in 1984; they were translated a year or two later. The fourth volume of the series, *Les Aveux de la chair* ['The Confessions of the Flesh'], the one that promised to present Foucault's treatment of early Christianity, was never published though appeared fragmentarily in Jeremy Carrette's curated collection from the archive (Foucault 1999) and in Foucault's Collège de France lectures from 1981 and 1982, which were published in English more than two decades later (Foucault 2005). A special issue of *The Journal of the History of Sexuality* published in 2001 (Boyarin and Castelli 2001) curated a collection of articles that did not seek to reconstruct Foucault's unpublished volume but rather invited contributors to flesh out various histories of sexuality using late ancient Jewish and Christian sources as the archive. (For a brief engagement with Foucault's influence on the study of spiritual practice and renunciation in Jewish antiquity, by way of Pierre Hadot's work—Hadot, one of Foucault's teachers and interlocutors about antiquity—see Schofer 2003.)

Foucault's legacy extends beyond its own explicit transmission and reception history, and it had a clear influence over a book whose influence cannot be overestimated: Thomas Laqueur's 1990 book, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, which posited a radical change in the understanding of the body—from the one-sex body to the two-sex body—toward the end of the seventeenth century. Laqueur is a medieval historian, but *Making Sex* provided a compelling and sweeping historical narrative stretching across centuries, disciplines, and archives. Produced in the wake of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, with its insistence upon the radical break between past and present, which Foucault situated in the nineteenth century, Laqueur's *Making Sex* was received enthusiastically by scholars across a broad interdisciplinary terrain, including among scholars of Christianity in late antiquity.

The book deserves a revisiting largely because Helen King, a historian of ancient medicine, has recently published a powerful critique of Laqueur's thesis in a monograph entitled, *The One-Sex Body on Trial: The Classical and Early Modern Evidence* (2013). King is far from the only scholar who has critiqued or challenged Laqueur's thesis, though as she notes, these other critiques generally follow a similar rhetorical pattern. As she puts it:

> The pattern of attacks on *Making Sex* is normally to say that, while the author accepts the overall validity of Laqueur's model, she wishes to challenge the particular sub-section on which she is an expert; thus the model as a whole manages to survive, despite multiple, and cumulative, challenges.
>
> *(King 2013: 15; see also 15 n. 61)*

Her own conclusion is more sweeping: '"Never" is a strong word but, as this book will show, I have found it difficult to identify any historical period in which a "one-sex" model dominated' (King 2013: 7). The substance of King's monograph offers not only a rather devastating critique of Laqueur's method and conclusions but also an alternative historical account that illuminates a more complex account of the medical, literary, and philosophical texts from antiquity.

Laqueur's one-sex theory may have been sidelined by the critique of King and others, but another work of theory published the same year—Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*—helped to launch the field of queer theory, a theoretical field that some scholars of sexuality and sexual renunciation in classical and late antiquity have used to construct a new theoretical scaffolding for their work. For example, Virginia Burrus's *The Sex Lives of Saints* (2004) offers a transgressive reading of early Christian saints' lives, arguing that these texts are 'the site of an exuberant eroticism' and 'that sanctity can be restyled as an erotic art, that the holy Life carries us to the extremities of human desire,' calling these ideas 'admittedly queer notions' (Burrus 2004: 1). She defines her terms in this way:

> Here as elsewhere, I use the term *queer* to designate erotic practices that actively resist and/or put into question the very categories of the 'normal,' the 'conventional,' or the 'natural,' particularly in contexts in which resistance exposes, critiques, and subverts the violence of both *domus* and *dominus*. The 'queer' overlaps at some points (but by no means at all points) with the 'homoerotic,' e.g., where homoerotic practices resist the conventions of either marriage or pederasty.
>
> *(Burrus 2004: 168 n. 66)*

More recently, historian of Christian asceticism David Hunter has argued for interpreting early Christian celibacy as a 'queer' practice. Adopting Patrick Cheng's definition of 'queer' as 'a transgressive form of religious life, especially one that is "transgressive or opposed to societal norms, particularly with respect to sexuality and gender identity"' (Hunter 2015: 13, quoting Cheng 2011: 5), Hunter argues that early Christian celibacy successfully challenged dominant social institutions like marriage and the family, disrupted and sometimes overturned the received gender norms and categories that governed late ancient society, and created an opening for new forms of homosociality and modes of living in monastic and other living arrangements (Hunter 2015: 21–22). 'If it is "queer" to question the hegemony of traditional ideals of marriage, to destabilize gender distinctions, and to create alternative lifestyles and new forms of community, then early Christian celibacy was decidedly "queer"' (Hunter 2015: 22).

Hunter builds on the work of feminist scholars who have emphasized the 'gender-bending' nature of many ancient Christian sources, especially those that represent spiritual virtuosity in terms of the transcendence of femininity or the transformation of the (inferior) feminine into the (superior) masculine. Less well explored has been the ways in which some authors flip the terms of the gender-bending when it comes to ascetical virtuosity, though a recent article by Ellen Muehlberger (2015) offers a salutary reading of Theodoret's *Religious History* highlighting Theodoret's frequent descriptions of ascetical men who were spiritual exemplars in terms that seem to have derived from ancient medical sources discussing female bodies. Muehlberger argues that through the use of these images, 'Theodoret conveyed the excellence and sheer strangeness—the "otherworldly nature"—of the ascetics he portrayed' (Muehlberger 2015: 585). The medical corpus reaches back centuries, but as Muehlberger points out, medical writers and practitioners in late antiquity were curators and conservators of knowledge, dependent to a very high degree upon their predecessors. As a consequence, the Hippocratic corpus' critical account of sexual difference as a difference predicated on the relative capacity to produce fluid from one's body—women being more highly fluid than men, as it were—functions as a scientific resource for much later writers and theorists, including a writer like Theodoret, who cultivated a vision of gender parity with respect to the ethical constitution of men and women subjects. Yet, as Muehlberger shows, Theodoret portrays ascetical men as possessed of feminine physical characteristics—specifically, the tendency toward the emission of fluids: tears and sweat, notably, but also blood. She goes on to read two particularly graphic episodes in the life of Simeon the Stylite in Theodoret's *History*, scenes in which other monks examine Simeon's body and discover 'something unexpected' in the wounds they probe. Muehlberger concludes by challenging scholars not to presume too much about the fixity of gender in the ancient Christian context but rather to remain open to local, shifting ideas about bodies, sexualities, and genders.

But there are other sorts of narratives too, including narratives that reflect on unexpected bodily pairings, homosocial bonds, and institutional responses to them as they emerge in stories about saintly lives and monastic communities. For example, Derek Krueger (2011) explores the theme of monastic companionship in a survey of Byzantine hagiographical sources, showing how narratives about the close bonds between two monks simultaneously mobilize and sublimate desire, offer aspirational models for those seeking to live the angelic life of asceticism, and suggest a complex dynamic of homosociality among monks—one that could (and likely did) provide a social form that supported celibate commitments but that might also inspire temptation (a frequent and urgent topic in monastic

handbooks) and also suspicion and envy on the part of those who witnessed these intimate bonds of friendship and affinity. Like Muehlberger, Krueger emphasizes the critical demand for attention to historical differences over the deployment of a general transhistorical and transportable notion of 'sexuality' across time and cultural context.

Future work might consider moving beyond the literary archive and into material culture and archaeology. See, for example, archaeologist Barbara Voss, who argues that 'queer theory provides a methodological bridge between archaeological research on sexuality and research on other aspects of social identity' (Voss 2008: 317).

Supplementing the archive: Coptic and Syriac sources

Recent scholarship on early Christian asceticism has sought to expand the research archive beyond the Greek and Latin sources that have dominated the field, and with the publication of new English translations of Coptic and Syriac sources—especially works by the fourth- to fifth-century Egyptian bishop Shenoute (Layton 2014; Brakke and Crislip 2015; see Emmel 2004) and the fourth-century Persian sage Aphrahat (Lehto 2010)—students and non-specialists can now have ready access to this rich body of literature.

The corpus of Shenoute's ascetical writings is still in the process of critical editing and translation by an international team of scholars. Following on from the codicological work of Stephen Emmel, scholars now customarily divide the corpus into two bodies of text: nine volumes of texts addressed to the members of his monastic community, both men and women (the *Canons*), and the eight volumes of collected writings for more public audiences—letters, sermons, and various other writings (the *Discourses*). Excerpts from these two collections have recently appeared in relatively easily available English translations: Bentley Layton's excerpts from the *Canons* (2014) and David Brakke's and Andrew Crislip's partial anthology from the *Discourses* (2015).

As Layton has edited and arranged the contents of the *Canons*, one encounters in the text a series of prohibitions and curses alongside more general statements about the life of the community (on form, see Layton 2014: 42–45; see Schroeder 2015 for a review of Layton's anthology and editorial decisions). The *Canons* offer ample material for reconstructing Shenoute's concerns over 'crushing carnal longing' (Shenoute *Canon* 3 [Codex YB 69–70 = FR-BN 130[2] f. 59r.-v.]; Layton 2014: 101, no. 27), cursing 'all who kiss or embrace one another with desirous passion, whether young or old, whether parent or child, whether male of female' (Shenoute *Canon* 1 [Codex XC 7 = AT-NB K9201 (1)r]; Layton 2014: 93, no. 5), yet there is a particular focus on prohibitions of behaviors and practices that might result in homoerotic encounters. (The gender segregation of the monasteries under Shenoute's governance rendered heterosexual encounters less likely.)

Scholarship on Egyptian monasticism, focusing on Shenoute's community and corpus, is still emerging and will develop further as the critical editions and translations produced by the international team under Emmel's leadership appear in print. Meanwhile, Brakke's and Crislip's introductory chapters provide a good overview of scholarship. Moreover, the work of Rebecca Krawiec on the women monastics of Shenoute's White Monastery (2002) and Caroline Schroeder on Shenoute's ascetic ideology (2006, 2007) are required reading.

Aphrahat's *Demonstrations* address the question of sex and sexual renunciation in *Demonstration* 6 ('On Covenanters'), where Aphrahat gives precise instruction about the ascetical life and its eschatological importance, and in *Demonstration* 18 ('Against the Jews, concerning virginity and holiness'), where he uses Christian sexual renunciation as a key rhetorical counterpoint to the Judaism of his time (Lehto 2006; Koltun-Fromm 2010; for a more general study of early Christian vituperative rhetoric, see Knust 2006). The rhetoric of *Demonstration* 6 suggests that Aphrahat views his audience as always potentially on the verge of abandoning the ascetic, renunciatory life; he bolsters his arguments on its behalf by emphasizing the dangers of women for ascetic men:

> [w]e know and have seen that from the beginning women have been a way for the Adversary to gain access to people, and until the end he will [continue to] accomplish this. For [women] are the weapon of Satan, and through them he fights against the [spiritual] athletes.
>
> *(*Demonstration *6.6)*

He also insists upon the superiority of the single life, commitment to which requires constant vigilance (see *Demonstrations* 6.5).

In *Demonstration* 18, meanwhile, Aphrahat reads the history of Israel in order to argue that the biblical narrative shows repeatedly how reproduction produces corruption and destruction, culminating in the argument, 'There are many similar [cases], in which it would have been better for [certain people] not to have fathered [children] or to have been born' (*Demonstration* 18.6). Allegorizing the Genesis 2:24, 'A man must leave his father and his mother and be united with his wife, and they will become one flesh,' Aphrahat interprets this passage as a defense of and exhortation toward asceticism:

> This is the meaning: when a man has not yet taken a wife, he loves and honors God, his Father, and the Holy Spirit, his Mother, and for him there is no other love. But when a man takes a wife, he forsakes his father and his mother (those which were just mentioned), and his mind is captivated by this world. His mind and his heart and his reasoning are dragged away from God into the midst of the world, and he loves and delights in it as a man loves the wife of his youth. His love for her is different than [his love] for his father and his mother . . . For it is true that just as a man and a woman become one flesh and one mind, and [a man's] thoughts and reasoning become separate from his father and mother, so too a man who has not yet taken a wife and who remains alone is in one spirit and one mind with his father.
>
> *(*Demonstrations *18.10–11)*

Sex and sexual renunciation in ancient and late ancient Jewish sources

In 2005, in a review essay published in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, rabbinics scholar Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert diagnosed a 'relatively minor delay' in Jewish Studies entering into the theoretical conversations about the body and sexuality (Fonrobert 2005: 462–463). This short delay notwithstanding, scholars in the field of Judaism in antiquity have been quite productive in recent years, generating a compelling body of work that should be read in close concert with scholarship on early Christianity. This work cannot be fully represented here, but a few exemplars will be illustrative.

With sexual renunciation occupying such a prominent position in the early Christian imaginary and with Foucault's foundational account of the history of sexuality tracing historical lineages from Greece and Rome to Christianity with barely a mention of Judaism, biblical scholar Lawrence Wills raised an important critique in a 2006 article, 'Ascetic Theology Before Asceticism?,' where he offered a supplementary narrative that traced the ascetic imperative back to pre-Christian Jewish narratives. Drawing upon Carol Newsom's earlier theoretical framing of asceticism in the Qumran material as an occasion of the 'decentering of the self' (2005), Wills reads the novelistic accounts of Esther, Aseneth, and Judith, and the pseudepigraphical testaments of Joseph and Job to argue for the existence of a significant 'narrative asceticism' in Jewish literature by the turn of the first century before the common era (Wills 2006). Positioning his own discussion in light of other recent scholarship on the nature and relative prevalence of Jewish asceticism, especially that of Michael Satlow (2003) and Eliezer Diamond (2004), Wills suggests that the literary models he analyzes expand the imaginative horizon through which self-decentering practices might have developed among Jewish writers and their audiences, well in advance of early Christian ascetical projects.

While these scholars can locate a tradition of asceticism within late ancient Judaism that resonates with that of late ancient Christianity, others have suggested a more oblique (if also more expansive) rabbinic relationship to *askesis* in the mishnaic system of purity. Mira Balberg's book, *Purity, Body, and Self in Early Rabbinic Literature* (2014), explores how biblical notions of purity translated into a new form of embodied living and social life in a different cultural and historical framework. Balberg focuses on theorizations of the body and practices of self-examination and self-scrutiny—that is, *askesis*—placing the idealizations of rabbinic prescriptions in heuristic comparison with Greco-Roman precursors, especially the moral philosophers. Sexual renunciation per se, so central for Christian ascetics and their efforts to reconstitute the self and society through the management of desire, is not at the core of rabbinic theorizations of asceticism, whereas the more expansive capacity for self-management and self-control (achieved through self-scrutiny) is. Balberg puts it this way toward the end of her study:

> The ability to control oneself, mentally and physically, is the main trait that distinguishes the idealized mishnaic subject from his oppositional counterparts . . . The life of the mishnaic subject . . . is underwritten by regimented self-examination that, as Seneca observed, yields self-mastery since one learns to shape one's behavior so as to avoid the exhortation of one's internalized overseer. To this end, the pursuit of purity (as well as, one might argue, adherence to Jewish law in general) not only depends on one's capacity for self-control, but also actively enhances this capacity.

She further states:

> [s]elf-control is intertwined in the mishnaic discourse of purity and impurity with *self-knowledge* . . . by portraying these two inextricable qualities as what enables the pursuit of purity, the rabbis gave the quest for ritual purity a new ethical substance, which allowed it to resonate with the cultural values that dominated their world.
>
> *(Balberg 2014: 165; for a comparative study of purity in rabbinic and early Christian sources, see Fonrobert 2000)*

Other feminist scholars working on Jewish sources have focused on narratives and metaphors of sexual violence and availability to make broader points about the status of the community in the wake of challenge or domination. Julia Watts Belser, for example, analyzes narratives from *b. Gittin* where the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE and the later Roman defeat of the Bar Kochba revolt in the early second century are narrated metaphorically as occasions of rape (*b. Gittin* 56; Belser 2014: 11–12; *b. Gittin* 58a; Belser 2014: 20–21) and sexual violence coupled with the humiliation and domination of enslavement (*b. Gittin* 57b; Belser 2014: 18–19). Close readings of the three narratives uncover a pattern of metaphorization that uses sexual violence and enslavement to signify political domination and lament, turning attention away from the ideologically charged instrumentalist use of women's bodies toward a story about the resilience of the community. 'Through narratives of sexual subjugation and rape, Bavli Gittin's account of the destruction of Jerusalem gives poignant voice to rabbinic grief and violation at the hands of Rome,' Belser writes. 'Through subversive mimicry that highlights the brutality of imperial conquest through sexual domination, these rabbinic narratives stigmatize Roman savagery and galvanize moral outrage at the brutality of the conqueror' (Belser 2014: 24). The writers of these narratives deploy graphic metaphors of sexual violence in order to scandalize, but in the process—by using sexual violence to think with, to borrow, and adapt a well-worn notion from Lévi-Strauss—they 'reinscribe the vulnerability and invisibility of women and enslaved people in both rabbinic and Roman cultures' (Belser 2014: 5).

Gail Labovitz, a feminist scholar of rabbinic texts, has also focused on the Babylonian Talmud, but undertakes a slightly different approach by looking at legal and narrative texts together, in order

to understand the work that these two genres perform in relation to each other. In a 2008 article, 'Of Proper and Unrestrained Men,' she examines the dense narratives in *Qiddušin* 80b–81b, which offer a commentary on the legal text *m. Qidd.* 4:12 (containing rules governing the private contact between men and women); because of the law's content, Labovitz argues that the narrative *sugya* provides its readers insights into rabbinic ideas about gender and sexuality. The narratives thematize the erotics of sight, the confusions and deceptions of impersonation, the vagaries and humiliations of sexual temptation, and the attractions of the forbidden. In reading the text closely, Labovitz argues that the narrative opens itself to multiple potentially contradictory readings of the text's position on gender and sexuality. Emphasizing a readerly, rhetorical, and literary approach to the text, Labovitz suggests that the multivalence of the narrative opens the text up and positions it as a space for reflection and questioning—perhaps, in the first instance, in the homosocial space of the rabbinic study house where men organized their learning and their social selves in relationship to the text and one another; but secondarily, for all readers, who might find in the text an ambiguity worthy of their engagement (Labovitz 2008: 66–68).

For rabbinic scholar Rachel Neis, the sense of sight itself can offer a window onto the rabbinic world's ideas about divinity, sexuality and gender, and rabbinic subjectivity itself. In a chapter devoted to 'visual eros,' Neis explores several key passages in which the rabbis, both Palestinian and Babylonian, argued about sexuality and its relationship to the gaze. Like Christian ascetical theorists, the rabbis understood that the gaze was inexorably linked to desire, and their efforts to police and regulate the gaze sought to rein in masculine desire in particular and to reshape masculine subjectivity. Neis finds in her texts an ambiguity that echoes Labovitz's:

> By constructing their own masculinity in terms of a restrained gaze, and by conceiving of themselves as erotic objects of vision, the rabbis end up confounding a straightforward account of the male gaze or of masculinity. At the same time, prohibition itself is productive of the forbidden. Especially as visual restraint or abstinence, it serves to form an idealized, 'holy' rabbinic subject.
>
> *(Neis 2013: 168–169)*

Again, like their Christian counterparts whose lives are preserved in hagiographic literature (see Krueger 2011; Burrus 2004 in particular), the rabbis' relationship to bodies, subjectivities, and sexuality can be understood to extend beyond strict normative, ascetical framings and into a different domain, that of the homosocial and the homoerotic—here, configured precisely through becoming the object of the gaze of another (see Schroeder 2009).

Masculinity

Much of the study of gender and sexuality in the religions of late antiquity emerged coincident with feminist historiography and feminist studies of religion. Insofar as 'gender' so often functions as a stand-in for 'women,' and because the critical and recuperative work of feminist studies was often initially focused on supplementing the dominant historiographical narrative (with its privilege of men's experiences), the critical engagement with the construction of masculinity took a bit longer to take hold in much scholarship on early Christianity. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, numerous New Testament scholars turned their critical skills to the task of analyzing masculinity as a gendered ideology in biblical sources and the effects of that ideology on writing about sexuality and sexual renunciation (Moore and Anderson 2003; Martin 2006; Conway 2008; for Roman sources, see Masterson 2014). A few years earlier and with characteristic theoretical acumen, Virginia Burrus explored how ideologies of masculinity intersected with and were transformed through the theological debates over the Trinity and the persons of the divine. Reading the writings of Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Ambrose—ascetics, all—Burrus showed how the ascetic impulse, as Geoffrey

Harpham named it some years earlier, and its reimagining of the body and subjectivity helped to shape a reformulated idea of 'manhood,' of paternity, and of generation, one detached from traditional notions of embodiment and social roles (Burrus 2000).

A year later, historian Mathew Kuefler published his groundbreaking monograph, *The Manly Eunuch*, a detailed and sweeping history of the remaking of notions of masculinity from the beginning of the third century CE through the middle of the fifth in the western Roman empire, a remaking shaped by the direct engagement of Christian ideology with dominant 'pagan' Roman models of manliness (Kuefler 2001). For Kuefler, the figure of the eunuch—a historical figure whose uncanny presence disrupted simple binaries of sexual difference and opened up the possibility for thinking masculinity differently, but also a robust metaphor for Christian thinkers whose ascetical commitments required an alternative model to the domestic patriarch/householder—provides a critical aperture for capturing the ideological shifts that took place around sex and gender in the period of the Christianization of the empire. The book culminates in a critical reading of the figure of the monk, 'the manly eunuch' of the book's title, a figure who managed to craft subjectivity out of a potentially contradictory set of associations and tropes—as soldier of Christ, as bride of Christ, and as eunuch for the kingdom of heaven (Kuefler 2001: 273–282). For both Burrus and Kuefler, the ideological innovations they trace for the notions of 'manhood' and 'masculinity' are paradoxical: a critique and abandonment of certain traditional notions, but a reinscription of authority and even (spiritual) paternity in new terms.

Whereas Kuefler and Burrus attend to the ideological construction of masculinity in theological and hagiographical sources as a matter of consolidation and reframing, Caroline Schroeder reminds us of the practical concerns over masculinity and sexuality in monastic communities in an essay with a whimsically anachronistic title, 'Queer Eye for the Ascetic Guy?' (2009). Schroeder opens by quoting a famous dictum from the *Apophthegmata Patrum/Sayings of the Desert Fathers*: 'Do not bring young boys here. Four churches in Scetis are deserted because of boys' (*PG* 65:225, quoted in Schroeder 2009: 333–334). Schroeder explores the broader literary and historical context for this prohibition, focusing on stories in the *AP* and the rules and letters of Shenoute, noting that such prohibitions exist in tandem with many literary references to the presence of boys and adolescent men within narratives about monks and monastic life. 'Despite the sources' overt disavowal of sexual contact between men and boys,' Schroeder writes, 'the circulation, retelling and rereading of these texts, containing their stories and rules about sex with children, keeps homoeroticism and the representation of boys as sexually desirable objects alive in the ascetic imagination' (Schroeder 2009: 334).

In the case of the scholarship on changing notions of masculinity, as with so many other topics taken up in this chapter, the source material is overwhelmingly literary and therefore vulnerable to the critique of its partiality and elitism. Hagiographical literature seeks to create ethical models, even as it presents itself narratively as historical chronicle. Treatises on the virtues of asceticism, rulebooks for monastic communities, even letters from ascetical leaders to communities and disciples all require a careful rhetorical engagement in order to extract plausible historical details—which remain fragmentary and open to multiple possible readings. Further research will need to take up more fully other available evidence—artistic, archaeological, epigraphic, and documentary—that offers the promise of a fuller portrait of the ascetical past. One suggestive example of the potential fruitfulness of this shift in source material may be found in Christian Laes's study of Latin funeral inscriptions in Rome, in which there is a vocabulary shift—the adoption of the Latin words *virginius* and, more commonly and surprisingly, *virgo* to describe a number of young men whose deaths are commemorated in early Christian epitaphs (Laes 2013).

Sex and the limits of renunciation: the example of slavery

Slavery was part of the social and economic fabric of the ancient world, taken for granted by most ancient sources (Bradley and Cartledge 2011). By both law and custom, slaves occupied a distinct subject position in ancient Mediterranean societies, subject to severe corporal punishment by their

owners and torture by the judicial authorities—and sexual use and abuse by their masters. Arguments against slavery are exceptionally rare in ancient texts, with the vast majority of sources either taking for granted slavery and the systems of domination that kept it in place (including the use of metaphors of slavery and freedom in theological and ethical contexts), or devoting themselves to discussions of the nature and management of enslaved people (Garnsey 1996; for non-textual, artistic sources, see Rose 2008). Until recently, scholarship on early Christianity has been reticent to engage with the question of slavery in the ancient Christian world, though the tide has turned in the twenty-first century (Clark 1998; Glancy 2002, 2010, 2011, 2015; Harrill 2005; Briggs 2010; Marchal 2011; De Wet 2015; for Judaism, see Hezser 2005, 2011; Labovitz 2012).

The work of Jennifer Glancy is exemplary for changing the terms of scholarly analysis and debate. Glancy has charted an unflinching course for scholarship to reconstruct a more complete portrait of the early Christian world—with respect to slavery in general, but also with respect to the sexual use of slaves by Christian masters. In a particularly trenchant summary of the historical situation, Glancy writes:

> Every generation of Christians in antiquity included slaveholders. The persistence of slaveholding as a practice among geographically scattered Christians over a period of centuries testifies to the enduring power of the institution of slavery in antiquity. With rare and limited exceptions, Christian authors expressed no opprobrium towards Christian slaveholders. Slaveholding was not considered a sin. Accommodation to slavery coloured ecclesiastical policy when the Church assumed political prominence in the fourth century. Even theologians who expressed antipathy towards the institution or the behaviour endemic to slaveholding produced no systematic critiques of slavery, nor did they advocate its abolition. Some bishops, priests, deacons and monasteries were slaveholders. Although individual theologians spoke against particular aspects of characteristic slaveholder behaviour, including brutal corporal punishment and the sexual use of slaves, we can adduce little evidence to distinguish the behaviour of ordinary Christian slaveholders from that of other Jewish, Greek or Roman slaveholders in locales as geographically and chronologically diverse as first-century Jerusalem, second-century Alexandria and fourth-century Milan.
>
> *(Glancy 2011: 461–462)*

Glancy focuses particular attention on what she calls 'a contentious area in the study of Christian slaveholding' (Glancy 2011: 466), Christian responses to the ubiquitous and routine sexual use of slaves by their masters. The evidence is fragmentary, to be sure, but even small references in ancient sources suggest at most efforts to manage an ongoing situation in which slaveholding was part of the fabric of society rather than opposing the widespread system of slavery itself. A third-century church manual (*Apostolic Tradition* 16:14–16) articulates the terms under which concubines of Christian men could be baptized into the church and Christian men could maintain their relationships with these enslaved women. Fourth-century bishops like Basil of Caesarea and John Chrysostom at several points admonished slaveholders over their sexual use and abuse of female slaves, and Basil also addressed the question of the moral status of a female slave forced into sexual activity. Glancy interprets this evidence as follows:

> [b]y late antiquity, a number of Christian authors explicitly addressed and condemned the sexual use of slaves by their owners, yet the impression created by their texts is that they spoke bravely against a practice deeply entrenched among Christians . . . From the east to the west of the empire, Christian theologians wrestled with a situation they confronted in their own communities, the socially sanctioned sexual use of slaves by slaveholders, including Christian slaveholders. Despite the objections of theologians, Christian slaveholders conformed to the universally attested ancient practice of relying on slaves as sexual outlets.
>
> *(Glancy 2011:467–468)*

Glancy's analysis, which is echoed by others (e.g., Marchal 2011; De Wet 2015), is important both as a corrective to the historical narrative and a trenchant reminder about the challenges and limitations of the sources themselves. Focused as we are primarily on written, literary sources that provide scholars with the social and moral perspectives of literate church elites, we remain always at a remove from Christians on the ground, as it were—the many who saw no contradiction between membership in the church and full participation in the social and economic life of the society at large. By reading the idealizing and aspirational admonitions of some church leaders against the grain, one encounters a more complicated portrait of the lived reality of Christian sex and sexual renunciation in antiquity.

Future work

As I have noted in relation to several of the themes and topics outlined here, the archive of primary sources for reconstructing the history of the body and sexuality in early Christianity and late antiquity is overwhelmingly contained in literary sources that reflect the perspectives and interests of literate elites whose framing of the questions is often beholden to philosophical and rhetorical models more well-suited to offering their readers a window onto an idealized or ideologically steeped world. I have offered a few modest suggestions for ways to expand the archive to include archaeology, epigraphy, and art within the body of ancient sources scholars and students might draw upon for their research. I would add to this list documentary papyri, limited insofar as most of it comes to us from Egypt (whose climate has allowed for its preservation) but nonetheless potentially enriching of our understanding of the lives and experiences of ordinary people whose interests and commitments may have been rather different from those of bishops, teachers, and other social elites. The recently published anthology by papyrologist Erica A. Mathieson (2014) supplements the scholarship of AnneMarie Luijendijk (2008) by focusing specifically on women in the Greek papyri.

Note

1 Editor's note: The first edition of the *Early Christian World* included an excellent review essay by Teresa M. Shaw on sex and sexual renunciation in early Christianity, which provides both a thoughtful engagement with the relevant theoretical issues and a survey of the historical archive. This chapter has been retained in its original form in this edition. The current essay focuses on the scholarly field since the publication of that first edition and so refers almost exclusively to work published since 2000 in this very lively field and offers a coda to Shaw's work.

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19

WOMEN, CHILDREN AND HOUSE CHURCHES

Mona Tokarek LaFosse

> In private houses also we see wool-workers, cobblers, laundry-workers, and the most illiterate and bucolic yokels, who would not dare to say anything at all in front of their elders and more intelligent masters. But whenever they get hold of children in private and some stupid women with them, they let out some astounding statements as, for example, that they must not pay any attention to their fathers and school-teachers, but must obey them; they say that these talk nonsense and have no understanding, and that in reality they neither know nor are able to do anything good, but are taken up with mere empty chatter. But they alone, they say, know the right way to live, and if the children would believe them, they would become happy and make their home happy as well . . . [and] they should leave their fathers and their schoolmasters, and go along with the women and little children who are their playfellows to the wooldresser's shop, or to the cobbler's or the washerwoman's shop, that they may learn perfection. And by saying this they persuade them.
>
> *(Celsus in Origen,* Against Celsus*, 3.55; Chadwick 1965: 165–66)*

As a critic of the early Christians, Celsus had many objections, but it is notable that his disapproval included the strategic presence of women, children and 'private' spaces. Celsus was drawing on a generalization in the ancient Mediterranean that women and children were susceptible to superstition and easily duped. This second-century critique is meant to discredit the teachings of the Christians[1] that Celsus saw as destabilizing social order. It is striking that women and children are highlighted, and implies that they were present in a way and with such numbers that outside observers took notice. Celsus refers to instruction not in public, but in closed and secret places, including places associated with women and children such as 'private houses'.

Celsus' critique brings together three important topics in the early Christian world that form the basis for this chapter: women, children and house churches. Though each could easily be justified as a chapter of its own, it is in the intersection of the three that we get a sense of how the movement of Jesus followers in the first and second centuries flourished in an urban environment. While the most prominent and visible people in the early Christian texts are men – Jesus, his twelve disciples, Paul and most of his co-workers – the centrality of the household for women's networks and children's upbringing provided stability for the community within the house church arrangement. Because their roles in society were integral to familial honour, women and children were perceived as being

able to uphold – or undermine – that stability. Thus, women and children, both idealized and real, were critical to the development of house churches in early Christianity.

Gendered rhetoric, modern readers and a cross-cultural endeavour

The vast majority of ancient texts were written by adult men[2] and thus represent *male* perspectives on women, children and households, that is, perspectives of literate men with some wealth or status (as opposed to slaves or those of lower status). As a result of the development of feminist[3] and post-modern approaches, scholars have debated to what extent these texts can help us, as modern readers, access the lives of 'real' women and children in history. Some suggest we only access (male) perceptions of the ancient reality, shrouded in a cultural and ideological context that is accessible only through these same texts (Clark 2001: 425–6). In other words, 'real' women and children's voices are rarely, if ever, heard directly from the ancient evidence. Others, however, are confident we can sift through the evidence to find these voices, even if at times we can only hope to see a shadow of their experience (Osiek and MacDonald 2006; Cohick 2009).

An important starting place is a recognition that the author's rhetoric, the choice of words, themes, characteristics and emphases, reflects not only the perspective of the author but also his attempt to persuade his audience. Thus, the 'representation' of household, women and children may align more with an ideological notion of 'household', 'woman' and 'child' than with the real lives and experiences of women and children who populated the early Christian world (Clark 2001: 425–6). For example, how much a prescriptive text can tell us about real women's experiences is limited. A statement like, 'I permit no woman to speak or have authority over a man; she is to keep silent' (1 Tim. 2:12; NRSV) does not tell us that women were all silent. Rather, in the opinion of the author of 1 Timothy, at least some women were speaking up inappropriately and usurping what he saw as the proper authority of men. Whether the women he implicitly addresses understood themselves as challenging the status quo or acting inappropriately is unknown. Though the text suggests that some women were flaunting wealth and appearing immodest (2:9–10), we cannot access the real activities, attitudes or behaviours of these women from this description. We can only access the author's ideas about proper female behaviour and identity.[4]

Similarly, narratives are crafted with a purpose. The author's use of character may reflect an idealized or demonized image or a more realistic portrayal of the lives and experiences of women and children. The author's portrayal may tell us about little more than his own male perspectives. On the other hand, we may glean details about activities, social networks and responsibilities of women and children with careful and informed reading of narratives. These stories likely resonated with their early audiences, so that women and children saw themselves somehow reflected in these tales.

It is also helpful to consider the social construction of gender in the ancient world (Clark 2001, 413–14). Beyond 'women' and 'men' in a biological sense, 'gender' refers to how what was considered properly masculine and feminine (in a cultural sense) informed the ancient world view, regardless of sex. In Roman thinking, masculinity and femininity were always connected to one another, usually denoting polar opposites, such as male as active and female as passive. All other things being equal, male had precedence and authority over female. These conceptions of gender and gendered behaviour permeated Roman social life (Kraemer 2011: 15–16) and help us see nuances of the rhetoric of gender in text.

Another consideration, highlighted especially by feminist and post-colonialist scholars (Fiorenza 1984; Segovia and Tolbert 1995; Sugirtharajah 1995), is about us as modern readers and how close we can actually come to accessing the ancient author's intent and assumptions. We each bring our own assumptions and questions to the texts, so that we can never escape our own subjectivity and identity in our reading.

By realizing our own position and assumptions as readers and by considering the rhetorical message, conception of gender and patriarchal cultural world view of the male authors of ancient texts, we can search for clues about real women, children and households. They can be glimpsed with

a two-pronged approach, which involves careful study and comparative work using insights from social history and social-scientific inquiry.

First, this approach involves comparing the language, characters and ideas of the text to findings of historians of the Greek and Roman world who work on text and artefact (Dixon 1988, 1992, 2001; Treggiari 1991; Balch and Osiek 2003; Rawson 2003; Saller 2004), including elite Roman texts and non-elite sources like papyri (e.g. wills, letters) and inscriptions (e.g. memorials, rules for voluntary associations). Second, this approach utilizes appropriately analogous context from modern Mediterranean ethnographies (observations and analysis of cultural anthropologists who have lived and participated in modern, traditional communities) to help to sketch out cultural patterns similar to the ancient Romans. Some ethnographies have access to women's worlds in a way that texts do not (e.g. Dubisch 1986; Fernea 1989; Abu-Lughod 1993). Such analogies from modern, traditional Mediterranean cultures, when corroborated by ancient evidence, help to provide a framework for studying texts about women and children in early Christian sources. It is important to note that modern, traditional ethnographies come with their own biases (no observer can be objective), adding another layer to sift through, even if what remains in the sieve is valuable! Again, that which is worthwhile in these observations needs to be corroborated with ancient evidence if it is to be useful in glimpsing real women and children in the ancient text.

Readers with modern, Western sensibilities tend to find some early Christian texts about women, children and house churches rather distasteful or offensive. Historical and cultural context, as outlined above, helps us to make sense of where these texts originated. As readers from a different time and culture than our own, it is important to recognize the gap between our modern experiences and values and those of the early Christian world. This is particularly important in a modern Western context when, for example, women have fought so hard to be able to count as persons in public discourse and activity, and when parents can usually assume their children will outlive them. The realities of the ancient Mediterranean were radically different, for men had social precedence, many children died before reaching adulthood and slavery was part of the fabric of society. Slaves of both sexes had no rights to personhood and no personal honour. Understanding women, children and house churches in the early Christian world means imagining a world that challenges modern Western assumptions about gender, age, individual motivation and cosmology. It means imagining a world on the basis of textual and visual evidence, striving to conceive of the realities of demography and social expectations of those living in the Roman empire. Early Christians both reflected and challenged the cultural values that informed the varying experiences of men, women and children.

In sum, the investigation toward teasing out the context of cultural norms and attitudes, of checking our own cultural and religious assumptions and of continuing dialogue and critique of scholars' investigations helps us to understand the perceptions of women, children and households, but also moves us toward seeing at least a little of the lives of real women and children, even if how close we come will continue to be debated.

Households and house churches

Celsus accuses Christians of sequestering their unsuspecting target in 'private' spaces. Early Christians often did meet in houses and eventually used household language and metaphor to characterize the relationships and sense of belonging for those in the group.

In Greek, the word *oikos* was used for 'house' (a physical dwelling) as well as for 'household' (those who lived within the house). Those who lived within the household, depending on the wealth and size of the household, included a husband and wife, their children and slaves, slave children, lodgers and perhaps extended family. A typical household was headed by the *paterfamilias*, a legal Latin word that referred to the man of house. The daily routine of the household was managed by his wife.[5] Various members of the household grew up and grew old; others joined and left through marriage, death, divorce, remarriage, needing care in sickness or old age, and the buying or selling of slaves.

Freed slaves would often remain in the employ of their former master. In some ways, the household was always in flux, yet it was also a place of stability, both physically and ideologically.

We might be tempted to think of *oikos* as one's 'family,' but, as the description above should demonstrate, this would be inaccurate. The definition of 'family' varies from culture to culture, which makes it a rather slippery term (Osiek 2011: 1). Some find the Latin words *domus* and *familia* helpful in conceptualizing what one might have meant by 'family'. *Domus* is roughly equivalent to the Greek *oikos* (both a dwelling and those who inhabit it) and *familia* refers to biologically related (or adopted) kin who may or may not live in the *domus* together (Bradley 1991; Dixon 1992). *Familia* was an important part of identity, but a person functioned on a daily basis and belonged to his or her *domus* or *oikos*. In ancient Greek times and in the time of the Roman Republic, when women married, they left their natal family and became part of the *familia* of their husband. However, by the first century CE, most women married *sine manu* (without *manus*, 'hand'), meaning that they were part of their husband's household, but still a member of their father's *familia*, which included the right to inherit from them. This shift promoted a new level of economic independence for some women, but also strong ties to both her natal family and her household (Winter 2003: 21). There were other shifts for women, such as Caesar Augustus' law, the *Lex Papia Poppaea*, which waived the requirement for a woman to have a male guardian for legal transactions, but only if she had three children, or four if she was a freedwoman. Augustus also promoted the concept of the household as central for the stability of the Roman empire, using it as a metaphor for the empire as a whole, with the emperor himself as the *paterfamilias* (legal head) of the family of the Roman empire (Rawson 2003: 38).

The two meanings of *oikos* correlate with two aspects of stability for the early Christian movement: the physical meeting space and a sense of belonging.

The story of Jesus and his disciples often featured scenes in houses (e.g. Mark 1:29, 33; 2:1; 3: 19–20; Gehring 2004: 18–118). Jesus followers met together on a regular basis perhaps often around a meal (1 Cor. 11:20–33) with worship, singing, reading sacred text and teaching (e.g. 1 Cor. 14:26; 2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 10:25). Pliny the Younger's letter to the emperor Trajan (*c.* 117 CE) describes Christians meeting for worship and teaching and later for a meal (*Letters* 10.96–97). As Paul's letters and Acts indicate, these communities flourished in urban centres in house churches (Gehring 2004: 119–228).

In this urban environment there were many spaces in which Christians may have gathered, such as shops, barns, rented dining halls or inns (Adams 2013), but houses are attested early on as an important venue for meeting together in community or *ekklēsia* (usually translated as 'church'; 1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:3–5; Phlm 2; Col. 4:15). Participants who were not slaves or lodgers in someone else's house mostly resided in *insulae*, or apartment buildings. Some *insulae*, like the House of Diana in Ostia, were large buildings, with shops at street level and apartments stacked two or three storeys high surrounding a shared courtyard. Others were more like Casette Tipo, a set of apartments with built-in latrines, also excavated at Ostia. Figure 19.1 features four ground-level apartments with two sets of central stairways that led to a second storey of apartments. One can imagine the close quarters meant neighbours knew one another well, and perhaps women worked together in their tasks of cooking, cleaning, caring for children and preparing for ritual. They were likely too cramped for any significant gathering, but may have been suitable at times.[6]

House churches may have met in Roman-style *villas*. It is unlikely many, if any, early Christians were from the elite class, but a relatively wealthy, non-elite person could own such a house. The House of the Vetti in Pompeii was owned by two brothers who were non-elite freedmen, for example (Ellis 2000: 1). The Pompeiian house of L. Caecilius Iucundus, a banker, is illustrative of possible use of space of such a house (Figure 19.2). The entrance of this house was flanked by two shops. The atrium was where one found oneself upon entering the house from the street (the perspective of Figure 19.2), probably used to receive guests. This could be the sort of space in which early Christians gathered, accessible and visible from the street. Further back in the house, less visible to outsiders, one finds the peristyle (garden) and adjoining triclinium (dining room), which may have been the kind of spaces used for meals and/or meeting.

Figure 19.1 Casette Tippo, Ostia. Photo by Carolyn Osiek

Figure 19.2 Atrium in the house of L. Caecilius Iucundus, Pompeii. Photo by Carolyn Osiek

As these descriptions should make clear, houses were not entirely private spaces. Houses may have been connected to shops; owners conducted business in the front space (atrium) of the house, which was accessible to all, including women and children, even if some deeper recesses of the house were considered more private. In fact, the house was a space that functioned between the private and the public. House churches functioned in this in-between space (Osiek and MacDonald 2006: 3–4). Women and children were integral to this in-between space. Many women were likely 'behind the scenes', with various roles that depended on social status, age, ability and other responsibilities, like child-minding. The house church would have been a bustling space, filled with children playing, infants nursing, women birthing in a back room, slave caregivers hushing their wards or herding them to alternative spaces, people coming and going (Osiek and MacDonald 2006: 67).

The owner of a house in which the church met may have functioned as a patron to the group (e.g. Stephanus, 1 Cor. 1:16, 16:15; Gaius, Rom. 16:23; Philemon, Phlm. 2; 1 Tim. 3:4), which included women (e.g. Col. 3:15). The patron–client relationship, often associated with men, formed the backbone of financial exchange and political power in the Roman world. It was an informal, long-term relationship that involved reciprocity: the patron provided support, usually in the form of resources (economic or otherwise), and in return the client offered loyalty and support, usually in

the form of public praise. Whether patronage translated into other kinds of leadership responsibilities (teaching, presiding at the meal) is uncertain, though house owners normally presided as hosts at banquets in their own homes.

If the household provided a stability of physical space and patronage for early Christians, the second aspect of the *oikos*, the group of people who lived in the household, provided a metaphor for the stability of belonging. The household symbolized continuity, concord and loyalty, but also the stability associated with hierarchy. While equality and equal rights are valued in the modern West, social hierarchy was the reality of the ancient Roman world. One's gender, age, class, wealth, marital status and whether one was freeborn, slave, or freed (that is, no longer a slave) were all indicators of where one sat on the spectrum of the social hierarchy and thus how one would behave with others. Hierarchy was evident both outside of and within household relationships.

Early Christian texts from the first century CE reveal a certain ambivalence about the household that may reflect the experience of those who experienced conflict within unbelieving households (Moxnes 1997). Conflict with biological kin was not everyone's experience, as suggested by greetings to households (e.g. household of Gaius, Rom. 16:23; the church that met in Philemon's house, Phlm. 2) and the portrayal of the baptism of the entire households of Cornelius (Acts 10:2, 48) and Lydia (Acts 10:15). However, the rejection of household relationships is reflected in the Gospels (e.g. Mark 3:33, 13:12; Matt. 8:22; Luke 9:60). In Corinth, some believers have unbelieving spouses (1 Cor. 7:12–16), and women with unbelieving husbands are addressed in 1 Pet. 3:1–3. Paul's use of fictive kin language for fellow members of this new community suggests a new conception of household relationships: Jesus followers now belonged to a new household. He addresses members as *adelphoi* (rightly translated in the NRSV as 'brothers and sisters'), emphasizing concord, unity and love for one another. The language is similar to that of voluntary associations, which also promoted cooperation and comradery (Kloppenborg 2012).

It is worthy of note, however, that this terminology was not meant to imply egalitarianism, as even siblings functioned according to age hierarchy (Aasgaard 2004). Though some scholars have argued for gender equality among the earliest Jesus followers, with a basis in Jesus' teachings and Gal. 3:28 (e.g. Fiorenza 1984), others are more convinced that within the cultural context of the time hierarchy continued to be the social norm, even if some, including early Christians, pushed the boundaries (Kloppenborg 1996).

By the end of the first century, the image of household came to symbolize stability and belonging in proto-orthodox circles, as exemplified by the use of household codes (also known by the German term, *Haustafeln*). These codes were derived from ancient Greek thought (e.g. Aristotle, *Politics* 1.1253b–1260b) and adapted by many writers in Roman times (Balch 1981). The household codes involve three pairs of relationships with reciprocal duties: husband–wife, parent–child, master–slave. The codes are uniquely adapted in early Christian texts[7] in that they address the subordinate party directly, for the letters were meant to be heard by all in the community, not the just the leading men. The codes are prescriptive, promoting an idealized stability, so they cannot directly tell us anything about women and children beyond their expected roles from a male perspective, but they do suggest the value and activity of all members, including women, children and slaves. The household codes also simplify the reality of household life since death, divorce, remarriage and the involvement of slaves in parenting complicated real life (MacDonald 2014). The rhetorical use of household codes coincides with the post-Pauline era, a time when the oral connections to those who had been eyewitnesses to Jesus and the apostles were almost gone, those with a 'living and abiding voice'.[8] It was a time of transition, instability and social persecution. In this way, the household codes can be understood as apologetic in nature, that is, meant to demonstrate to suspicious outsiders (like Celsus) that Christians were upright, principled and even model members of society, as demonstrated by their behaviour toward each other (Crouch 1972).

The household also became the metaphor of the community as a whole: the 'household of God' (Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 4:17). This metaphor suggests the value of the variety of people in

Figure 19.3 Grave stele of Herophanta and Posideos. Smyrna, about 150 BCE. 71.AA.288. Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program

the group that reflected those in a typical household, but also the value of the functional hierarchy present in the household: older over younger, men over women, masters over slaves. The author of 1 Timothy uses a variation of the code that emphasizes gender and age (5:1–2) and advocates proper behaviour as a way to combat rivals and their teachings as well as promote concord in the 'household of God' (3:15; Verner 1983).

Household codes and the 'household of God' metaphor suggest an ideal, stable, hierarchical community, but also suggest that women and children were valued in the community to such an extent that they were addressed directly. The household as an analogy of the community along with the physical space of a house promoted stability, but this would not have happened without the presence of women and children.

Roles of women: real and ideal

Women were integral members of the household. They were also clearly part of the early Christian movement from the beginning, from characters in the earliest Jesus stories to being named and addressed in Paul's letters. Though depictions of women in the early Christian texts reflect perception

Figure 19.4 Wall fragment (fresco) with two women. Roman empire, 1–75 CE. 96.AG.302. Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program

rather than reality, with an informed imagination we can glimpse the lives of real women. Representations of women demonstrate their promotion or potential threat to the stability of the community (as exemplified by Celsus). But real women simply provided stability to the early Christian movement through their domestic roles, patronage, networks, ritual and leadership.

The cultural value of honour is the backdrop to much of the rhetoric around women's behaviour and representation of women in early Christian texts. Honour was a public recognition of worth conferred by public opinion. The group to which one belonged, especially one's family, was the centre of a person's honour, and it dictated nearly every social interaction outside of one's household. One's social status determined a certain amount of honour, but in some respects honour could be earned. In public discourse or activity, a group's honour could be challenged and needed to be defended. Women were pivotal for maintaining group honour, for in their behaviour and appearance they embodied the reputation of their group with 'shame'. Shame meant sensitivity to the group's reputation (honour) and manifested in modest behaviour. Women were often associated with positive shame, though younger family members were also considered to have shame, displayed in modest behaviour. Immodest behaviour would bring negative shame (disgrace or dishonour) to the group, the opposite of honour. One's behaviour and conduct could either bring honour or shame to all. Women, whose bodies (and thus sexuality) were to be protected by men, were especially vulnerable to accusations of dishonourable behaviour which would bring shame to the entire group (Torjesen 1993; MacDonald 1996). This is evident in statements about women whose behaviour did not conform to this value. In 1 Cor. 11:1–16, for example, Paul exhorts women to cover their heads when they pray or prophecy as a sign of their husbands' authority. The main issue is one of shame: Paul reflects his own cultural ideas about women behaving modestly in order to maintain the honour of the group. Veiling protected their sexuality and demonstrated modesty.

Because of the public face of honour and women's integral role in maintaining honour, women were perceived as being able to weave or unravel the social fabric of a family, a group, or even society. Children, especially sons, could enhance a family's status and provide stability of the family over time. As the locus of familial honour, the household played a crucial role in the stability of early Christian communities.

Highlighting women's bodies was perhaps exacerbated in the face of a movement toward asceticism (Col. 2:20–23; 1 Tim. 4:3). In the second century, Priscilla and Maximilla, two of the founders of the New Prophecy (later known as Montanism, named for the third founder, a man named Montanus; Trevett 1996) were condemned for leaving their husbands and displaying ecstatic behaviour in public. Similarly, Tertullian condemns the stories of Thecla (*On Baptism*, 17), a woman who, under the influence of an ascetic version of Paul, refuses to marry, dons male clothing and goes off teaching and baptizing (*Acts of Paul and Thecla*). These women were portrayed as challenging the stability of the household (cf. MacDonald 1983).

Exhortations and comments about women's behaviour (such as the household codes) represented traditional values that had a basis in the household and especially on marriage. The words used for a woman's identity were dependent on her marital status: virgin (*parthenos*), wife (*gynē*, which was also the word for 'woman'), and widow (*chēra*), a woman who is no longer married because of the death of her husband or divorce. Chastity (protecting the sexuality of a woman either in her virginity or marriage) and self-control (*sophrosunē*) were the most important virtues a woman could have (1 Tim. 2:9, 15). Both virgins and wives who were of childbearing age were at stages of life during which women's sexuality was to be guarded for the sake of reputation and legitimate heirs. Motherhood was highly praised, and memorials for young girls often lamented that they would be unable to marry and bear children.

Women of childbearing age were particularly vulnerable to accusations of immodest behaviour. For example, the young widows in 1 Tim. 5:11–15 who are going about from household to household are acting outside of the parameters of modest behaviour. Inappropriate behaviour could compromise the reputation of the group. Widows were liminal women – neither a virgin

Figure 19.5 Kline Monument with a reclining girl. Roman empire, 120–140 CE. 73.AA.11. The inscription reads: 'Here reposes the most beautiful girl, what a pity in such a young age, and the image [of] . . .'. Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program

nor in a sanctioned sexual relationship. Young widows were more prone to be criticized because they were still of childbearing age, and any inappropriate behaviour could be seen as having a sexual connotation. This does not mean that she was being sexually promiscuous necessarily (*pace* Winter 2003: 123–40), but that her actions are perceived as sexualized because they compromised her modesty and thus the reputation of the group (MacDonald 1996).

Stereotypes of older women have remnants of sexuality: older women were depicted as either ideal matrons (especially as a *univira*, a woman only married once) or drunk, gossiping hags, possibly inappropriately obsessed with sex (Cokayne 2003). The positive stereotype is reflected in 1 Tim. 5:9–10, with a description of an ideal matron who has spent her life doing good works for the benefit of others, and in Tit. 2:3–5, where older women teach younger women to be good wives. We also see the negative stereotype in Tit. 2:3, exhorting women not to be 'slanderers or slaves to drink' (NRSV).

Metaphorical images of women demonstrate the same kinds of stereotypes (Miller 2005: 287–321). For instance, on the one hand, a woman represented the church as the submissive and pure bride of Christ (Eph. 5:23–32; Rev. 21:2).[9] In *Shepherd of Hermas*, the church is depicted as a wise old woman (*Visions* 2) who is progressively younger (*Visions* 23). In Revelation, a woman bears a child who is the Messiah (Rev. 12:1–6). On the other hand, a woman could represent corruption and deception, such as Jezebel (Rev 2:19–23; an allusion to the idolatrous wife of King Ahab in 1 Kings 16:31) and the whore of Babylon (Rev. 17:1–18).

These stereotypes tell us a great deal about perceptions of women and the potential for their behaviour to be perceived as threatening stability, but little about the women themselves, their exercise of power and their roles in the early Christian world that provided stability in real and tangible ways. Yet, with some work, we can glimpse real, lived experiences and some of the complexities of the lives of women in the early Christian world. The fact that men saw themselves as having to protect women's modesty and exhort them to behave 'properly' suggests that women had the power, albeit not legitimate authority (MacDonald 1996), to provide or erode stability in early Christian communities. Women's domestic roles were crucial for household stability, and likely the stability of the Christian community as it developed, including roles as wife and mother and as part of networks of women involved with rituals associated with birth, marriage and death.

In order to consider real women behind the texts, we should assume women are included unless there is a compelling reason to believe otherwise (Osiek and MacDonald 2006: 6–7). In addition

Figure 19.6 Drunk old woman clutching a jar of wine, statue in the Capitoline Museum, Rome. Photo by John S. Kloppenborg

to 'brothers and sisters' (*adelphoi*), women should be assumed to be among the apostles, prophets, teachers and healers in Paul's community at Corinth (1 Cor. 12:28), for instance. We have clear evidence of women who prophesied (e.g. 1 Cor. 11:5; Acts 21:9) and taught (e.g. Acts 18:26; Tit. 2:3–5), despite the prohibition in 1 Tim. 2:12. In Rom. 16:7, Junia is considered an apostle.[10]

Women's real social and economic responsibilities and experiences in daily life were much broader than traditional ideals would suggest (Dixon 1988, 2001; Osiek and MacDonald 2006; Cohick 2009). We should envision a broad array of categories for women of varying social class and life circumstances and at various ages,[11] including older and younger married women; older and younger widows; women with children, women without children; women with parents or parents-in-law to please or to care for; women with young children in their care, perhaps their own, but perhaps also including surrogate children, slave children or foundlings; women with adult children; women as mothers-in-law; women with grandchildren, nieces, nephews and other kin; women who owned slaves and women who did not; women married to believers; women married to non-believers; women who themselves were not believers married to a believer (even though a wife was ideally expected to follow her husband's religious traditions). Some women were wealthy; some were poor; some worked in a trade or shop, such as vending food; others were employed (or served as slaves) as wet-nurses, child minders or midwives. We also need to consider female slaves, who were not considered 'women' (slaves had no gender), but may have a slave-husband and children (who were also slaves). This nuclear family could be separated from her at a master's whim. As a younger slave, she would be sexually available to a male master.[12] Some women may have been freed from slavery, but likely still worked for their former male or female masters; some may have married their former male masters. Early Christian women may have fit into any of these categories, likely several over their life course.

Marriage was expected for women. Non-elite women probably married in their late teens, usually to men five to ten years older than they were. Marriage was typically formally arranged by fathers with mothers' involvement. Little is said in the ancient literature about dowries, presumably because the nature of dowries was assumed and of little note (Treggiari 1991: 323–64). With modern analogy, we might think of dowry as wealth of some kind and/or goods and items that would help a young woman set up or contribute to her new household. There is scattered evidence for whether the new bride would live with her husband's family (and thus be subject to her mother-in-law, known as patrilocal marriage) or whether the new couple set up house in their own space (neolocal marriage). For early Christian women who lived in crowded urban areas, the neolocal pattern was more likely. Papyri and legal rulings suggest that women had regular contact with their mothers as well as their mothers-in-law (LaFosse 2017).

Concomitant with the role of wife is that of mother. Some women died as a result of complications related to childbirth. Many infants and children died. On average, a woman experienced the death of siblings and playmates as a child and youth, the death of parents as well as infants and children in their twenties or thirties, and in later life the death of her husband (Saller 2004). A woman might also lose her children due to divorce or the death of her husband because the children belonged to their father's *familia* or kin, and might be raised among his kin unless they were very young. On the other hand, there is evidence that some women raised their children themselves, as is suggested by the reference to Timothy's mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5) or their natal family, as suggested by Perpetua handing over her son to her father (*Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*). If a woman was still in her childbearing years, remarriage was culturally expected and probably often financially necessary. Remarriage could produce complex families that included half-siblings, step-siblings and children (Dixon 1988; MacDonald 2014).

Marriage could be even more complex among the earliest Christians, especially when women were married to unbelievers (Remus 1999). Early on in the movement, Paul recommends a woman remain married to an unbeliever if he is willing (1 Cor. 7:13). A later situation seems to call for more caution, as the author of 1 Peter exhorts such women to conform to the ideal wifely behaviour of modesty and submission, with hopes of quelling suspicion but also of evangelism (1 Pet. 3:1–2). Interestingly, however, her submission does not extend to forfeiting her faith. This suggests a level of autonomy and choice (and perhaps courage!) for women in their social and religious lives.

Women married to believers can be assumed in the households of Stephanus (1 Cor. 1:16, 16:15), Gaius (Rom. 16:23), Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 4:19) and the overseer of 1 Tim. 3:4. The gospel stories suggest that Peter had a wife, since Jesus healed his mother-in-law (Mark 1:29–31 and parallels). Wives (or possibly deaconesses) are explicitly highlighted in the description of deacons (1 Tim. 3:12). Apphia (Phlm 2) is either Philemon's wife or another integral woman in the house church. Prisca (also known as Priscilla) was married to Aquila; both were co-workers of Paul (1 Cor. 16:9; Rom. 16:3–5; 2 Tim. 4:19; Acts 18:2). In two instances (Rom. 16:3; 2 Tim. 4:19), Prisca is listed before Aquila, perhaps suggesting she was a free woman married to a freedman (a former slave), or if both were former slaves, perhaps Prisca was freed first. Alternatively, she may have simply had a higher status in the community because of her natal family's place in society. Prisca and Aquila set up house churches in several locations, including somewhere in Asia Minor (1 Cor. 16:19), perhaps Ephesus (16:7), and in Rome (Rom. 16:4–5). One wonders if Prisca travelled with children in tow, or if it is more likely that she had no children or had grown children.

Most married women probably did not travel much or far, and so resembled most non-elite wives in the Roman empire. They managed their households and raised their children – tasks which would give them a certain amount of authority in the household. Their work included mundane daily activities and/or providing direction to slaves and servants within the household, including meal preparation (e.g. Mark 1:31 and parallels; Luke 10:38–42). While these activities might have mattered for the reputation of the Christian community (1 Tim. 5:14; Tit. 2:5), they also provided daily stability within the household. In other words, women had the ability to provide or threaten stability for the community in their regular domestic roles (MacDonald 2014: 144–6, 158–62).

It would be erroneous to think of wives spending all day sequestered in their houses. Analogies from modern Mediterranean ethnographies (e.g. Fernea 1989; Abu-Lughod 1993), suggest that women had strong social networks, probably a combination of kin and neighbours, which functioned beyond the usual view of men or the public eye. We may glimpse these networks in the expectations for women to teach and care for other women (Tit. 2:3–5; 1 Tim. 5:16) and in the condemnation of gossip and storytelling (1 Tim. 4:7, 5:13). These lines of communication, though viewed as problematic by male authors, were probably crucial for the flow of news, including information dissemination in Christian communities (Kartzow 2009). In the fictional tale of Thecla, a network of women seems to be in view when a group of women sit together, shout, lament and throw flowers into the arena to save Thecla from the lion (*Acts of Paul* 4.7, 8, 10).[13] Groups of women depicted in biblical narratives may suggest female networks, such as Luke's depiction of Mary visiting Elizabeth (Luke 1:39–45) or the group of women supporting Jesus and the disciples in their ministry (Luke 8:2–3). In Acts 9:36–42, a group of widows mourn for a woman named Tabitha who died and was raised as a result of Peter's prayer (9:40–41). She is described as 'devoted to good works and acts of charity' (9:36, NRSV), supporting a group of widows in need by providing them with clothing (9:39). Several women come to anoint Jesus' body but find the empty tomb (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:55–24:1; Matt. 28:1 has only two women, and John 20:1 has only Mary Magdalene). These last two stories suggest an important function of women's networks: ritual.

Women likely functioned together to prepare for and implement rituals tied to the women's work within the household, such as the related rituals around birth, marriage and death (Lamoreaux 2013: 68–74). Childbirth occurred in the home, attended by a midwife and other women, likely a woman's kin (Lamoreaux 2013: 112). Although funerals were attended by all, women were associated with funerary rituals and caring for the ancestors, including laments, visiting tombs, holding feasts at home or at the tomb and telling stories about the deceased. This was universal for all classes in the ancient Mediterranean (Corley 2010: 22, 30). Some women may have suffered ridicule in their female networks for rejecting particular cultic features of rituals when they became believers. This may be the case in Philippi, where the cult of Artemis was strongly connected to birth and death rituals (Lamoreaux 2013: 114–17).

Figure 19.7 Marble plaque depicting positive experience of birthing with three women attending the birthing mother, Ostia. Science Museum, London, Wellcome Images

These networks of cooperation were not devoid of hierarchy, however. Older women would have had precedence over younger women, but also responsibility for them (Tit. 2:3–5). Women of higher social status and/or wealth would have precedence over their social inferiors. Some women were marginalized. An older widowed or divorced woman with little wealth or status and no children, for example, would have been especially socially and economically vulnerable. Support from the Christian community may have been particularly attractive to widows in these circumstances. Widows are visible to critics of the movement (like Celsus above). Lucian of Samosata's satirical tale of a swindler named Peregrinus features Christian widows and orphans visiting him in prison (*The Passing of Peregrinus*, 12–13). The widows' great grief over Tabitha's death (Acts 9:36–42) suggests she provided them with more than material support. We gain an even clearer picture of the plight of widows from 1 Tim. 5:3–16. A 'real' widow is an older woman (contrasted with younger widows, 5:11) who is alone (5:5), with no husband and no grown children or grandchildren to support her (5:4, 8).[14] Her economic support apparently came from the community (*ekklēsia*; 5:16), suggesting that without this support, she would be destitute.

In addition to wealth and social status, a woman's age determined her level of authority and responsibility since women gained authority as they progressed through the life course (Harlow and Laurence 2002: 127–30). Women whose children reached adulthood experienced elevated status, especially if they had sons. In fact, the stage of life in which a woman had grown children was the most powerful of her life. Not only did she have influence over grown sons and daughters, but she also helped to arrange marriages, thus becoming a mother-in-law and, in an urban environment, was probably involved in raising her grandchildren.

Another role that involved authority and influence was that of patron. Many imperial women offered patronage, but patronage was not reserved for the elite only. Women who had some wealth were frequently patrons, and could have female or male clients.[15] Paul identifies Phoebe, a woman from the church in Cenchrae, as a *prostatis* (patron or benefactor) of him and others (Rom. 16:1–2).

She is a woman of some wealth since she has provided patronage for Paul. This may have involved hospitality in her home or other financial support. The women said to have supported Jesus and his disciples financially according to Luke (8:2–3) would have represented a form of patronage. Whether or not this is historically true, it does confirm patronage as an acceptable and honourable role for women.

Some women were the heads of their households. In the story of Acts, Lydia, an independent woman with a notable profession dyeing expensive, purple cloth, was the head of her household.

Figure 19.8 Priestess burning incense. Roman imperial period, *c.* 125–130 CE. Marble, from the Greek Island of Paros. Francis Bartlett Donation of 1912, 34.113. Photograph ©2016 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Her whole household was baptized along with her as a result of Paul's teachings (Acts 16:14–15). She offered him hospitality as a gesture of reciprocity (Acts 16:15, 40). Tavia (Ign. *Smyr.* 13:2) is the head of her household (no husband is mentioned), as is Chloe (who is perhaps not a believer herself; 1 Cor. 1:11). Mary, the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12) and Nympha (Col. 4:15) headed households in which believers met together.[16] As hosts of house churches, they would have been treated with the respect due to patrons (Osiek and MacDonald 2006: 214).

Even through a male lens, we see some specific responsibilities and leadership roles for women. In addition to her patronage, Phoebe is called a *diakonos* (literally 'servant'; Rom. 16:1). This term probably denotes a representative from one church to another (Osiek and MacDonald 2006: 215), suggesting she travelled a great distance, carrying the letter to Rome on Paul's behalf and with his commendation. She also probably read the letter to the community at Rome, having been instructed by Paul to act on his behalf (Esler 2003: 117–18). In Philippians, Euodia and Syntyche (4:2–3) do not have clear roles but they are important to Paul, for they struggled alongside Paul in his work. Even in the later pseudepigraphical letter of 1 Timothy, where women were directed not to teach or have authority over a man (or husband; 2:12), women named as either deaconesses or the wives of deacons (the Greek is ambiguous; 1 Tim. 3:11) had an important role, for the author's desired characteristics are listed in parallel with those of the deacons.

Much more could be said about these and other women in the gospel stories and Acts, in apocryphal stories and later Christian writers like Tertullian. The aim here was to illuminate the representation of women in male-authored texts as figures who could strengthen or threaten the stability of the community by how their behaviour was perceived. More than this, we catch some important glimpses of the experience of real women in early Christian communities and the ways that domestic roles, women's networks, ritual and patronage provided real stability for the growing movement.

Children in context

If it is challenging to search out the lives of women in the early Christian world, it is even more challenging to explore the world of children. Children have recently become a topic of sustained study by Roman historians (Rawson 2003) and early Christian scholars (Balla 2003; Bunge *et al.* 2008; MacDonald 2014). Like women, children represented family stability, but the delight and hope they brought was frequently tempered by the experience of grief over early death.

From the time of Caesar Augustus in the first century CE, children were especially used in imperial propaganda to symbolize family stability, and by extension the stability of the empire (Rawson 2003: 31–4, 51–4). Children were also represented as vulnerable and in need of guidance and protection, such as laws of tutelage (Rawson 2003: 71), which were also in place for women for a similar reason. The reason for a tutor was that if a child's inheritance or property was not properly guarded, it could threaten the continuation of the family's economic stability.

In modern Western cultures of the global north, parents expect their children to grow into adulthood. In the ancient world, parents could only hope their children would reach adulthood, because many children died in infancy or early childhood. Only about two-thirds of all children survived past the age of ten (Harlow and Laurence 2002: 10; Parkin 2003: 48–9, 280). Even so, or perhaps especially so, Rawson convincingly argues for the value and visibility of children in the Roman family (2003), who nevertheless outnumbered those aged sixty and over by five to one (Parkin 2003: 51). Legitimate children who survived to adulthood continued the family line; as they grew older, children cared for their aging parents. Children symbolized 'stability and continuity', as exemplified in the grief of hopes lost in memorials of deceased children (Rawson 2003: 31). Freed parents celebrated the joy of family stability not always enjoyed by slave families with monuments highlighting their free born child (MacDonald 2014: 150).

Untimely death and divorce contributed to mixed families, but also the many varieties of people who would be part of children's daily experiences. Children of both sexes were cared for and trained

by mothers and other female kin, and/or nurses, who were frequently slaves – a possible opportunity for evangelism if they were Christians. Free children and slave children, especially of the same household, were often raised together. In fact, slave children in households with some wealth or status may have experienced little difference from free born children within the household. Slaves may have played roles as pseudo-kin in lieu of absent or deceased parents (MacDonald 2014). The parent–child relationship was ideally at the core of the household, but given the demography of the time, the network of relationships in the household filled in when need be.

The early Christian texts suggest that despite some early evidence of movement toward ascetic practices (Col. 2:20–23; 1 Tim. 4:3; Ign. *Smyr.* 13:1; *Acts of Paul and Thecla*), most early Christians would have followed the social convention of marrying and having children. Jesus welcomed and healed children in the gospel stories (e.g. Mark 5:21–24, 35–43; 10:13–16 and parallels). Paul considered children of at least one believing parent to be 'holy' and 'clean' (1 Cor. 7:14; MacDonald and Vaage 2011). As noted above, the household codes and conception of the community as the 'household of God' highlighted children as valued members.

The education of children was the primary activity critiqued by Celsus, who portrays children as vulnerable and easily duped. Indeed, teaching children was important. Ephesians 6:4 states: 'fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord' (NRSV; cf. 1 Tim. 3:4–5; *1 Clem.* 21:6, 8; *Did.* 4:9). In the Roman world, education was an important part of childhood, both absorbed and taught directly. Children learned from watching and experiencing their surroundings, at home, in public and during festivals, but may also have

Figure 19.9 Bust of a boy named Martial. Roman empire, dated *c.* 98–117 CE. 85.AA.352. The inscription reads: 'To the dearest Martial, a slave child, who lived two years, ten months and eight days. [For him] well deserving, Tiberius Claudius Vitalis provided [this monument]'. Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program

Figure 19.10 Woman and girl. Cameo set in a modern ring. First century CE, Roman empire. 2001.28.10. Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program

more formal education (Rawson 2003: 148–209), for non-elite often in the form of apprenticeship in a trade (Rawson 2003: 191–6). In addition to fathers' instruction, children in house churches would have been present during worship, ritual and teaching. The storytelling of mothers, nurses and caregivers was likely the beginning of their education. Enforcing honourable behaviour, including deference to elders,[17] as part of moral training would also have been important (cf. *Shepherd of Hermas*, *Visions* 3.1–2, 6.2–4).

Mothers were thought to have a special role in teaching children, including moral and religious instruction (1 Tim. 2:15; Polycarp *Phil.* 4:2). Eunice and Lois, named as Timothy's mother and grandmother, exemplify this role of religious instruction (2 Tim. 1:5, 3:15). Perhaps certain women had special teaching responsibilities, such as Grapte in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, who is commissioned to teach the 'widows and orphans' (*Visions*, 9.3).[18]

Even though childhood was rather precarious, children's presence would have been ubiquitous in house churches. Children represented the continuity and stability of the household, but in the house church children themselves were valued as members of the community who would maintain the tradition and knowledge of the movement.

Conclusion

Given the nature of our textual sources, it is often difficult to separate the *representation* of women, children and households from the *reality* – that is the real, lived experiences – of women and children in

the context of house churches. It was largely within house churches that the early Christian movement developed, struggled and grew. We can ascertain that women and children had a significant presence in the early Christian communities, some with noteworthy or significant roles or activities, but many about whom the texts are silent. They were integral to the stability and continuity of the movement. Because their roles in society were central for familial honour, women could undermine that stability, and though many children did not survive to adulthood, children represented continuity. Household codes prescribed roles, but also demonstrated the value all members, including children and slaves, as did later authors who described the community as a 'household of God'.

In sum, house churches provided meeting places that secured a stability of place in the early Christian world, a place in which women and children were always present. Women promoted, threatened or simply provided stability. Children enabled the stability of a next generation.

Notes

1 Although use of the term 'Christian' is anachronistic for the earliest Jesus followers, this chapter focuses on the proto-orthodox Jesus movement from Paul to the second century. By the end of this period, the use of the term 'Christian' is justified, so it is used throughout for the sake of convenience.

2 The Pythagorean texts are one possible exception, though this is debated; Perpetua's diary appears to be written by her, though this also has been debated. Inscriptions such as memorials or epitaphs were commissioned by women at times, and some papyri letters are a source of female writing.

3 Two great strengths of feminist scholarship have been alerting readers to the presence of women in the text and challenging our assumptions about the roles of women. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's seminal work *In Memory of Her* (1983) was one of the first to shine light on the many women present in the early Christian texts.

4 Letters with disputed authorship, like 1 Timothy, have further methodological issues. If a letter is deemed pseudepigraphical (written by someone other than the stated author), there are at least two layers to be aware of: the fictional layer of the letter in which the author crafts the fictional voice of his letter writer speaking to his fictional audience, and the recipient layer in which the author addresses the issues relevant to him and his real audience. Even in places when we can detect the 'real' audience, the author's perspective and rhetoric colour his ideas about women and children.

5 Among the elite, the *paterfamilias* received clients in the morning within his house, then headed out to perform his political or civic duties, leaving his wife to manage the household during the day. Patronage was an informal but integral part of the social and economic structure of Roman society and was not reserved for the elite alone. Anyone of some wealth could be a patron; patrons were not only men.

6 On the archaeology of house churches, see Osiek and Balch 1997.

7 Col. 3:18–25 is usually considered the earliest, followed by Ephesians 5:22–6:1; 1 Peter 2:18–3:7; 1 Tim. 5:1–2 and Tit. 2:2–10. *1 Clem*. 21.6–8; *Did*. 4.9–11 and Polycarp, *Philippians*, 4.2 suggest further developments around the end of the first and into the second century.

8 Papias, as cited in Eusebius *Eccl Hist* 3.39; translation by Ehrman 2003, II: 97.

9 This is reminiscent of depictions in the Hebrew Bible of Israel, the people of God, which are not always so pure or idealized (e.g. Hosea).

10 Though the Greek form (accusative case) could be male or female, the former translation of the masculine 'Junias' is no longer considered valid. The feminine name 'Junia' was likely seen by translators as problematic because Paul associates with her the role of 'apostle', a role that is otherwise connected to men.

11 I follow here the ancient Roman binary categories of gender: masculine and feminine. Although modern notions of gender are more diverse, we have far less evidence of diverse gender identity than we have for women or children in the extant evidence.

12 Christian texts do not speak about this issue directly, but Col. 3:22 does direct slaves to unquestioning obedience to masters (Osiek and MacDonald 2006: 111). MacDonald suggests that Christian sexual ethics may have helped to protect such women (2014: 153).

13 A new system of numbering the *Acts of Paul* is now standard (Pervo 2014). In the older system of numbering for the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, these would be sections 32, 33 and 35.

14 Cultural norms across the Roman empire dictated that children care for their parents into old age (Parkin 2003: 205–26).

15 For example, an inscription in Corinth features the accolades of a generous patron and benefactor named Junia Theodora (*SEG* 18, 143). The so-called *Laudatio Turiae* (*CIL* 6.1527), an inscription praising the dedicator's wife, includes a description of how she provided dowries for her younger female kin as an act of patronage (she herself had no children).

16 It is possible they are married to unbelievers (like the unnamed wife of Epitropus [or wife of a steward], Ign. *Poly*. 8.2), but more likely they are widows, and probably older widows. Widows of childbearing age were more likely to remarry (cf. 1 Tim. 5:12).
17 The word for this is *pietas* (roughly equivalent to the Greek *eusebeia*, often translated as 'godliness'; e.g. 1 Tim. 2:2; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11). This was a core virtue in Greek and Roman thought that meant behaving in ways suitable to one's position in the world, including submission to one's superiors, being a loyal citizen and family member, and honouring parents and God (or the gods).
18 'Orphans' may be fatherless (and thus accompanying their widowed mothers), parentless or abandoned and in need of care.

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20
WORSHIP, PRACTICE, AND BELIEF

Maxwell E. Johnson

Early Christian worship, practice and belief—as contemporary liturgical scholarship has come to realize—is a topic of enormous complexity: it is diverse in its origins, multi-linear in its development, and closely related to the several cultural, linguistic, geographical, and theological expressions and orientations of distinct churches throughout the early Christian world (Bradshaw 2002; McGowan 2014; see Figure 20.1). Hence, the practices and interpretations of worship throughout the first centuries of the common era were quite different depending upon where specific practices are to be located. Similarly, these early differences would result, especially during the great formative period of the fourth and fifth centuries, in the distinct liturgical 'rites' of East and West, distinct 'styles of Christian living' (Kavanagh 1984: 100), which still characterize the make-up of Christianity today (see Figure 20.2). Very recently, researchers have begun to analyze aspects of Christian worship considered in this chapter using cognitive science approaches to ritual (as in Uro 2016 and Chapter 21 of this volume), and this is likely to be a growing field of interest in the future.

This chapter focuses on the principal liturgical acts of and occasions for worship where such diversity in practice and theological interpretation was most apparent, namely, in the rites of Christian initiation, the Eucharist, daily prayer, and the liturgical year. Because of important changes in liturgical practice after the Council of Nicea (325 CE), this chapter is organized into two major sections: first, 'Worship, practice and belief before the Council of Nicea,' where what evidence there is for these rites is surveyed; and, second, 'Worship, practice and belief from the Council of Nicea to the death of Augustine of Hippo,' where the further evolution and interpretation of these practices are discussed.

Worship, practice and belief before the Council of Nicea

Initiation

Based on Jesus' baptism by John (Matt. 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22; John 1:31–34), possibly on Jesus' own baptismal practice (John 3:22, 26, and 4:1), and in general continuity with the overall context of ritual washings and bathing customs within first-century Judaism (Lathrop 1994: 23–31; Collins 1995: 35–47; Johnson 2007), new converts to Christianity, at least from Pentecost for the Christ-movement onwards (Acts 2:38–42), were initiated into Christ and the Church by a ritual process which included some form of 'baptism' with water, a process that eventually would be based on the command of the risen Jesus (Matt. 28:19). Unfortunately, the New Testament itself records

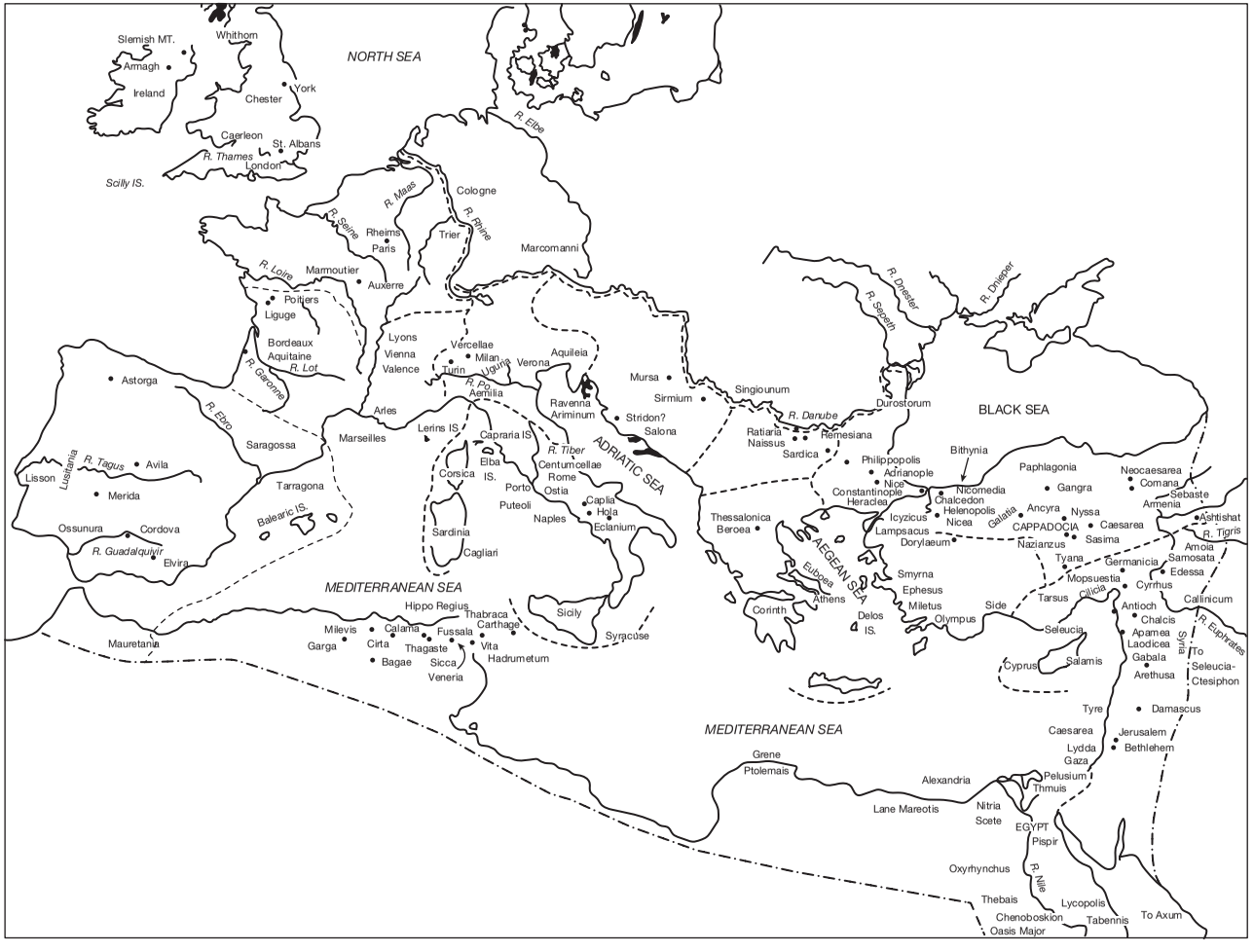

Figure 20.1 The Christian world in the fourth century CE. Copyright SPCK

Rites of the Eastern Churches *

Byzantine Armenian West Syrian Maronite East Syrian Coptic Ethiopic

Rites of the Western Churches †

Roman North African Ambrosian Gallican (includes Celtic) Mozarabic

* All seven eastern rites remain living liturgical traditions today among Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches.

† Along with the Roman rite, the Ambrosian (Archdiocese of Milan, Italy) and Mozarabic (Toledo, Spain) remain living liturgical traditions today.

Figure 20.2 Classical liturgical rites of east and west

little detail about this baptismal practice or what additional ceremonies may have been included. While we might assume that some kind of profession of faith in Jesus as Lord was present, we do not know, for example, if any particular 'formula,' for example, 'I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' from the dominical command for baptism in Matt. 28:19 or, 'in the name of Jesus' (Acts 3:6), was employed. Neither do we know precisely *how* baptisms were regularly conferred—by immersion, complete submersion, or pouring (Stauffer 1994: 57–66), whether infants were ever candidates for baptism in the New Testament period, what kind of preparation may have preceded adult baptism, whether anointings were already part of the process, or if occasional references to the apostolic conferral of the post-baptismal gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8 and 19) were regular features of baptismal practice in some early communities or exceptional cases due to particular situations. For that matter, in a recent study of foot-washing in the Gospel of John, it has even been suggested that among some early 'Johannine' communities it was not baptism at all but a foot-washing ceremony that constituted the 'rite' of Christian initiation (Connell 1996: 20–30).

What the New Testament does provide is a rich mosaic of baptismal images,[1] two of which will stand out with particular emphasis: Christian initiation as new birth through water and the Holy Spirit (John 3:5ff.), and Christian initiation as being united with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3–11). Around these, several of the other New Testament images will eventually cluster as specific baptismal 'ceremonies.'

Our earliest extra-biblical sources for the rites of Christian initiation provide only a few more, albeit important, details. Chapter 7 of the (probably Syrian) late first- or early second-century proto-church order called the *Didache* directs that, after instruction (presumably the kind of ethical formation supplied by chapters 1–6 of the document) and one or two days of fasting on the part of the candidates, baptizers, and community alike, baptism is to be conferred in cold running (i.e., 'living') water. The *Didache* instructs that if neither cold nor warm running water is available, then other water is to be poured over the head of the candidate, accompanied by the trinitarian formula of Matt. 28:19. Only the baptized, we are instructed further in chapter 9, are to receive the Eucharist.

In the middle of the second century at Rome, chapters 61 and 65 of the *First Apology* of Justin Martyr not only corroborate the information provided by the *Didache* but add some other elements:

> (*Chapter 61*): . . . those who believe in the truth of our teachings and discourses promise that they can live in accordance with it. Then they are taught to pray and, while fasting, to ask God for the forgiveness of their past sins. We, for our part, pray and fast with them . . . Next, we bring them to a place where there is water, and they are reborn in the

> same way as we ourselves were reborn before them. That is to say, they are cleansed with water in the name of God the Father and Master of the universe, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. For Christ said: 'Unless you are born again, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven' . . . Upon the person who wishes to be reborn and who repents of his sins, we invoke the name of God the Father and Master of the universe . . . We call this washing an 'enlightenment,' because those who are taught as we have described have their minds enlightened . . . (We also invoke) upon the person who is enlightened and cleansed the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and the name of the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets foretold the entire story of Jesus.
>
> (*Chapter 65*): After we have thus cleansed the person who believes and has joined our ranks, we lead him in to where those we call 'brothers' are assembled. We offer prayers in common for ourselves, for him who has just been enlightened, and for all . . . everywhere . . . When we finish praying, we greet one another with a kiss. Then bread and a cup of wine mixed with water are brought to him who presides over the brethren.
>
> *(Deiss 1979: 91–2)*

Because Justin refers in the above description to what may be called 'creedal' language, it is not clear if a baptismal formula is intended or if he is alluding to an early example of the *western* three-fold profession of faith as constituting the 'formula' of baptism. At the same time, while it is often assumed that Justin describes *Roman* liturgical practice, his theology of baptism as 'new birth' and his reference to baptism as 'enlightenment,' characteristic emphases in the Christian east, may reflect an *eastern* Christian tradition (Justin, after all, was from Flavia Neapolis in Syria) or, possibly, a Syrian community at Rome. Nevertheless, the overall ritual pattern described by him underscores that some kind of pre-baptismal 'catechesis' (instruction) preceded baptism and that this entire process of becoming a Christian culminated in the sharing in the prayers, kiss, and Eucharist of the community.

It is only in the early third century that a more complete picture of the variant processes of early Christian initiation begins to emerge. Here, we begin to see detailed evidence of several additional ritual elements. But the extent to which any of these elements is present will vary according to liturgical tradition.

In early Syrian documents—the *Didascalia Apostolorum* and the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*—a pattern of initiation appears to exist wherein the baptism of Jesus is seen as the primary paradigm for Christian baptism and the theology of baptism flows from the 'new birth' focus of John 3. While these documents place minimal stress on catechesis, there is a strong emphasis on a pre-baptismal anointing of the head (and, eventually, the whole body), interpreted as a 'royal' anointing by which the Holy Spirit assimilates the candidate to the kingship and priesthood of Christ, baptism accompanied by the Matthean trinitarian formula, and the concluding reception of the Eucharist (Winkler 1982, 1995). It is also possible, but by no means proven, that one of the principal occasions for initiation in the early Syrian tradition was January 6, the Feast of the Epiphany, interpreted, primarily, as the Feast of Jesus' baptism (Winkler 1994a). Several scholars have also suggested that early Egyptian initiation practice provides a close parallel to that of Syria in this time period (Kretschmar 1963; Bradshaw 1988: 5–17; Johnson 1995a: 5–16), although in Egypt it appears that candidates for baptism were enrolled *on* Epiphany and then baptized forty days later, with catechetical instruction given during a fast associated with Jesus' own forty-day fast in the wilderness (Talley 1986: 194–213; Johnson 2007: 201–18; Bradshaw and Johnson 2011: 99–108).

Western sources of the third century provide alternative patterns to the early Syrian, and possibly Egyptian, practice. In North Africa, Tertullian's *De baptismo* (*c.* 200) describes a ritual process which included 'frequent' pre-baptismal vigils and fasts, a renunciation of Satan, a three-fold creedal profession of faith in the context of the conferral of baptism, a post-baptismal 'christic' anointing related to priesthood, a hand-laying 'blessing' associated with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and participation in the Eucharist, which also included the reception of milk and honey, as symbols of entering into

the 'promised land' (Whitaker and Johnson 2003: 8–11). Tertullian's description is corroborated generally a little later in North Africa by Cyprian of Carthage (Whitaker and Johnson 2003: 8–11), and for Rome, presumably, in the so-called *Apostolic Tradition*, traditionally dated *c.* 215 and ascribed to Hippolytus of Rome, although authorship, dating, and provenance of this document have been challenged by recent scholarship (Bradshaw *et al.* 2002: 82–135).

According to the so-called *Apostolic Tradition*, pre-baptismal catechesis was to last for 'three years' and included frequent prayer, fasting, and exorcism, with entrance into the 'catechumenate' itself accompanied by a detailed interrogation of the motives and life-styles of those seeking admittance. For those eventually 'elected' to baptism, the rites themselves took place at a Saturday night vigil, and consisted of a renunciation of Satan, a full body anointing with the 'oil of exorcism,' a three-fold, creedal interrogation accompanied by the three immersions of baptism itself, a post-baptismal anointing by a presbyter with the 'oil of thanksgiving,' an entrance into the assembly, where the bishop performed a hand-laying with prayer and a second anointing, and, after the kiss, the sharing of the Eucharist, including the cup(s) of milk and honey referred to by Tertullian. Since authorship, date, provenance, and influence of this church order are all subject to intense scholarly debate today, the details provided by it must be received with due caution. It is possible that several of these elements, e.g., the 'three-year catechumenate' and the episcopal anointing, reflect later (fourth-century) additions or interpolations (Bradshaw *et al.* 2002). Nevertheless, although the earliest extant text of the *Apostolic Tradition* (mid fifth century in Latin) does not interpret the bishop's hand-laying prayer and anointing as 'giving' the Holy Spirit but as requesting 'grace,' subsequent versions of the document will do precisely that and, at least at Rome, the association of these episcopal acts with the conferral of the Holy Spirit will become a characteristic emphasis.

Along with these specific ritual details, third-century sources also show that infant baptism, including infant communion, was being practiced widely. Tertullian strongly cautions against it (*De baptismo* 18). Origen calls it an 'apostolic custom' (*Commentary on Romans* 5, 9). The so-called *Apostolic Tradition* makes provision for those 'who cannot answer for themselves.' And Cyprian gives a theological defense based on the inheritance of the 'disease of death' from Adam (*Epistle* 64). Similarly, Tertullian is the first author to express a preference for initiation taking place either at Easter or during the fifty days of Easter ('for then was accomplished our Lord's passion, and *into it we are baptized*', Whitaker and Johnson 2003: 10). It may be that something similar is intended in the so-called *Apostolic Tradition*, but since this document only refers to initiation at a Saturday (or, alternatively, even a *Friday* night vigil, there is no compelling reason to assume that it is the *Easter* vigil which is meant.

Eucharist

Stemming from Jesus' table companionship with 'tax collectors and sinners' as the celebration of the in-breaking of the eschatological 'reign' or 'kingdom of God,' his several feeding miracles, the Synoptic (Matt. 26:26–29; Mark 14: 22–25; Luke 22:14–20) and Pauline (1 Cor. 11:23–26) accounts of his 'Last Supper,' the meal contexts of his post-resurrection appearances (cf. Luke 24 and John 21), and the continued meal customs of the apostolic Church (Acts 2:42, 46), the central practice of early Christian worship was the 'breaking of bread,' 'Lord's Supper,' or 'Eucharist' celebrated in obedience to Jesus' command to 'do this' table ritual as his 'memorial.' Whatever may have constituted the diverse culinary contents of such 'Eucharistic' gatherings early on (bread, wine (or water!), cheese, milk, honey, fruits, and/or fish), or whatever the precise order may have been (McGowan 1995: 551–5), our earliest documents (1 Corinthians 11 and *Didache* 9 and 10) confirm that the 'Eucharist' was, initially, a literal meal, held most likely in the evening within a domestic, i.e., 'house church,' setting (Peppard 2016), with the contents of the meal provided by members of the assembly themselves (McGowan 2014: 19–64). There is little doubt but that early Christianity came into existence and continued to spread 'as a meal fellowship' (Bradshaw and Johnson 2012: 1–24; Lathrop 2012: 41; O'Loughlin 2015; see Figures 20.3 and 20.4).

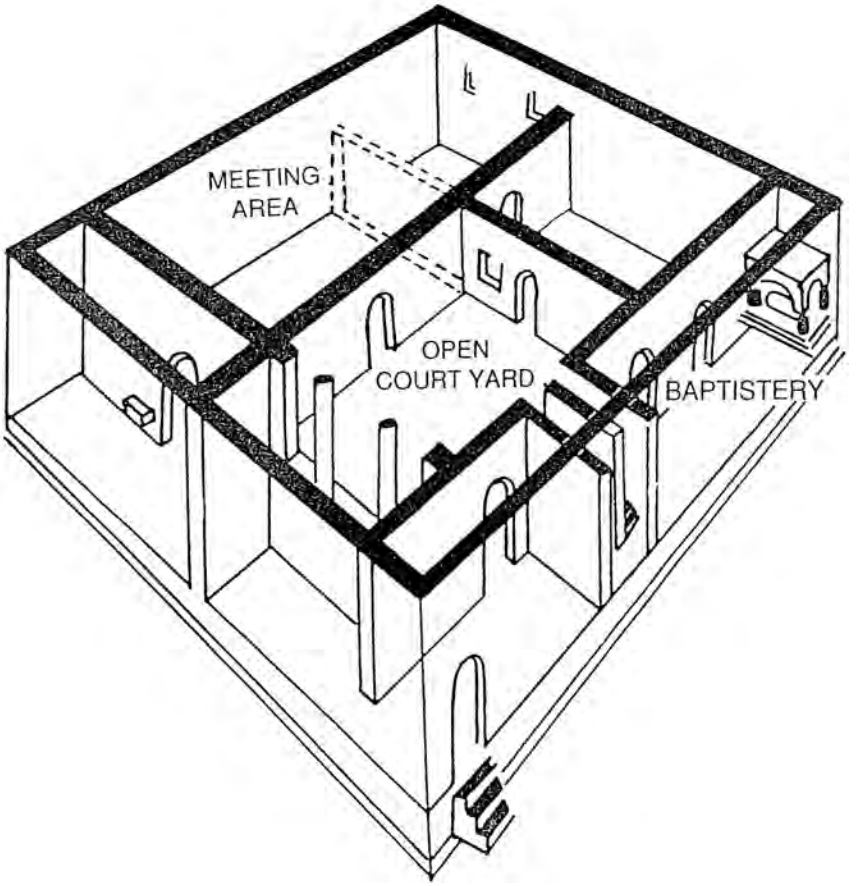

Figure 20.3 Illustration by Armando Garzon-Blanco of the house church at Dura-Europos, Syria, *c.* 235 CE (from Chiat and Mauck 1991: 101; reproduced with permission from Marchita Mauck and the University of Notre Dame Press)

Figure 20.4 Fresco of Eucharistic scene from the Catacomb of Saint Callistus, late second century CE. From Wilpert 1903: Plate 41.4

By the middle of the second century, the 'meal' itself had become an occasional evening service called the *agape* (portrayed in Roman catacomb paintings dated to the second half of the second century CE, as seen in Figure 20.4), with only the specific ritual sharing of bread and cup in the context of praise and thanksgiving increasingly transferred to Sunday morning and remaining as the central focus of worship. Again, it is Justin Martyr in chapter 67 of his *First Apology*, who provides our earliest overall description of what constituted this Sunday morning worship. According to him, this celebration consisted of:

Assembly
Reading (from the writings of the prophets and 'memoirs' of the apostles, as long as time permitted)
Exhortation (or Homily) by the 'president' (*proestos*)
Prayers offered in common
Kiss
Presentation of Bread and Mixed Cup (wine and water)
Thanksgiving Prayer over the Bread and Cup (prayed extemporaneously by the president (or *proestos*) to God, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit)
'Amen' by the assembly
Sharing the Meal
('Deacons' take the eucharistic gifts to the absent)
Collection (for the poor, orphans, and widows)

Whether the 'Reading' and 'Exhortation' stem from the fusion of a Jewish synagogue-type service with the Eucharistic action, or were included as part of the meal setting from the very beginning, remains debated. Nevertheless, the ritual skeleton provided by Justin is discernible in every Christian Eucharistic tradition thereafter.

Although Justin is clear that the 'Eucharistic Prayer' or '*anaphora*' (prayer of offering) was extemporized by the presider, some models for this prayer are provided in other documents of the first three centuries. Just as Jewish meal prayers (i.e., the *Birkat ha-Mazon*) 'remembered' God's saving acts in history and 'invoked' God's continued presence and the fulfillment of those saving acts, so *anamnesis* (remembrance of Christ) and *epiclesis* (invocation) would come to characterize early Christian Eucharistic praying in texts such as the meal prayers in *Didache* 9 and 10 (Syria), the *Strasbourg Papyrus* (Egypt), that of *Addai and Mari* (Syria), and the anaphora of the *Apostolic Tradition* (for texts, see Jasper and Cuming 1987: 23–4, 53–4, 42–4, 34–6). The anaphora of the *Apostolic Tradition* already includes both a brief 'narrative of institution' (i.e., the words of Jesus at the Last Supper) and an explicit *epiclesis* of the Holy Spirit in relationship to the reception of the 'fruits' of communion, but other extant anaphoral texts and fragments display no evidence that these elements were a regular feature of early Eucharistic praying. Since it is usually assumed that such elements were not incorporated into the anaphora until the fourth century, it is possible that their presence in the anaphora of the *Apostolic Tradition* are fourth-century additions. Within the first three centuries, then, the institution narrative itself may have functioned as a 'distribution formula' at the sharing of communion, or, alternatively, as part of catechesis on the Eucharist (Kilmartin 1974: 268–87; Bradshaw and Johnson 2012: 25–59).

Whatever the liturgical use of the 'institution narrative' may have been, it did not function as a 'consecration formula' for the setting apart of the bread and cup. What 'consecrated' the bread and wine was the prayer of thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) itself. Nevertheless, that Christians of the first three centuries understood the Eucharistic bread and wine to be identified in a rather realistic manner with the 'body' and 'blood' of Christ is also clear. So Ignatius of Antioch (*c.* 98–117 CE) can refer to the Eucharist as the 'medicine of immortality' (*To the Ephesians* 20.2) and can draw a Christological parallel between the incarnation of Christ and the Eucharist, indicating that certain 'Docetists,' who denied the reality of the incarnation, also abstained from the Eucharist because 'they do not acknowledge

the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ' (*To the Smyrnaeans* 7.1). What is unclear is whether Ignatius is referring directly to the Eucharistic bread or to the Eucharistic act as a whole in this context (Klawiter 2007). Justin Martyr appears to be the first to note that the bread and cup of the Eucharist is not 'common bread or common drink' but the 'flesh and blood of [the] incarnate Jesus' (Deiss 1979: 92), and Irenaeus of Lyons (*c.* 180) asserts that 'the bread . . . when it receives the invocation of God is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, the earthly and the heavenly' (Power 1991: 15). If a short time later, Tertullian can refer to the bread or wine as the '*figura*' (figure) of the body or blood of Christ (*Adversus Marcionem* 4.40), this should not be interpreted as a repudiation of realistic in favor of symbolic language, but within an overall philosophical context where 'symbol' participates in the reality being signified.

Related to this is the early Christian notion of the Eucharistic action as the Church's 'sacrifice' or 'offering,' an association made as early as *Didache* 14. Viewed as the fulfillment of the 'pure sacrifice' of Mal. 1:11, the earliest interpretation of this 'sacrifice' appears to have been the 'offering' of prayer and thanksgiving as the Church's 'bloodless' offering of *praise* in contradistinction to the 'blood' sacrifices of Judaism and the religions of the Greco-Roman world. Its relationship to the Eucharist thus had to do with the great '*eucharistia*,' the *prayer* 'offered' over the bread and cup.

Suggested by the fact that early Christians themselves still brought gifts of bread, wine, and other food to the Eucharist both for Eucharistic use and distribution to the poor, and by a response to Gnostic dualism and denial of the overall importance of the material world, the 'Eucharistic sacrifice' came to be seen as somehow embodied in these material 'gifts.' Hence, the anaphora of the *Apostolic Tradition* can refer to the bread and cup as the 'oblations' that the Church now 'offers.' At the same time, Cyprian of Carthage draws a parallel between Christ's own sacrifice and that which is offered in the Eucharist by the 'priest' (i.e., bishop), 'who discharges the office of Christ,' and states that the latter is done 'in commemoration' of the former (*Epistle* 63.14).

With regard to this, one must proceed cautiously. Recent scholarship has argued that early Eucharistic use of sacrificial terminology was a deliberate attempt to subvert the religious meaning of sacrifice altogether and to assert that the *Christian* sacrifice is no cultic sacrifice at all but the 'offering' of praise and thanksgiving leading to and expressing the priestly life of the community in its ethical service to the poor and in grateful response for God's own gifts (Daly 1978; Lathrop 1993: 139–58). What is 'offered' *in* the Eucharist, then, 'is what the New Testament has Jesus order us to offer: the memorial of his own self offering' (Taft 1996: 45), that is, the liturgical *doing* of the Eucharist in obedience to his command.

Apart from its common celebration on Sundays, it is not clear how often during the week the Eucharist may have been celebrated throughout the first three centuries (Taft 1984: 62). Practice undoubtedly varied from place to place. In some places the Christian fasting days of Wednesdays and Fridays (*Didache* 8) may have concluded with a public service of the Word and the reception of communion from the reserved Eucharist (Alexandria) or become occasions for the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy itself (North Africa). Occasional celebrations in cemeteries, at the tombs of the martyrs, in homes, prisons, and elsewhere are known to have become so common in North Africa that by the middle of the third century Cyprian can refer to a 'daily' celebration at Carthage. And local expansions of liturgical calendars from the end of the second century on to include the 'anniversary' days of martyrs' deaths also contributed to a growing Eucharistic frequency in the early churches. There is also concrete evidence (Tertullian, *Ad uxorem* 2.5) that Christians regularly took enough of the Eucharistic elements home with them each Sunday in order to be able to receive communion at other times during the week, a practice that would persist for several centuries both among the laity and within monastic circles.

Daily prayer

Christians of the first three centuries, whether in private, with family members, or in small gatherings, also knew a regular pattern of prayer at several intervals throughout the day. Again, however,

there is no single pattern that can be taken as universally normative. Rather, the New Testament mandates to 'pray always' (1 Thess. 5:17) and to 'sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God' (Col. 3:17), resulted in various patterns within the early Christian communities. *Didache* 8, for example, directs that Christians are to pray the 'Our Father' three times each day. Other sources (Clement of Alexandria and Origen) also know a three-fold daily pattern (morning, noon, and evening, with an additional period during the night), others (Tertullian) emphasize a two-fold pattern of morning and evening as 'official' or 'statutory' prayers ('*legitimae orationes*'), and still others (e.g., the *Apostolic Tradition*) know an '*horarium*' which consists of a five-fold pattern: morning, third hour, sixth hour (noon), ninth hour, and evening, with an additional period during the night. In addition to this, the so-called *Apostolic Tradition* also refers to morning assemblies for 'instruction' and evening gatherings for the communal *agape*.

Traditional scholarship sought to demonstrate that daily morning and evening prayer were 'public' liturgical gatherings in direct continuity with Jewish synagogue practice, with prayer at the third, sixth, and ninth hours added as 'private' occasions (Dugmore 1964). Recent research, however, has shown that Jewish patterns of prayer were themselves also quite diverse and that the most that can be said of the relationship is that both Jews and Christians prayed at fixed times (Taft 1986a: 3–11). If any pattern is the 'original' Christian practice, it is probably the three-fold one, but this was organized differently within the early communities. In some places, the pattern was correlated with the natural divisions of the day (morning, noon, and evening) and in others in relationship to the divisions of the work-day throughout the Roman empire (i.e., at the third, sixth (noon), and ninth hours). What sources like the *Apostolic Tradition* demonstrate, therefore, is probably a conflation or synthesis of these two three-fold patterns to form the 'classic' *horarium* known as the 'liturgy of the hours' (Bradshaw 2010: 77–8).

Unfortunately, we know very little about the contents of daily prayer in the first three centuries, though we can certainly assume that psalms, readings from Scripture, and hymns were frequently used. It is possible that Psalm 141, with its reference to the 'evening sacrifice' (Ps. 141:2) was already a regular feature of evening prayer (at least in Egypt), but this is not known with certainty (Johnson 1995a: 40–2). Rather than emphasizing specific contents, from early on the principal focus of prayer at these fixed intervals was seen as an expression of eschatological watchfulness and readiness (cf. Col. 4:2 and Eph. 6:18), an expectant and continual 'vigil' (cf. Matt. 25:1–13; Mark 14:32–37; Luke 12:35–48) for the imminent return of the Lord (Taft 1986a: 15ff.). Together with this, and ultimately replacing it in overall emphasis, daily prayer, like the Eucharist itself, came to be seen as part of the spiritual 'sacrifice of praise' expressing the self-offering of Christians in their lives of service to God. Perhaps the way in which Christians are depicted in the Roman catacombs, standing with their arms extended (see Figure 20.5) expresses something of this self-offering.

Liturgical year

Sunday is often called the original Christian *feast*, although the precise relationship between Sunday and the Jewish Sabbath remains a subject of scholarly debate for the New Testament and earliest periods of history (Bacchiocchi 1977; Bradshaw and Johnson 2011: 3–39). It seems likely that among the earliest Jewish Christians the Sabbath meal on Friday nights began to take on Eucharistic overtones, with other Eucharistic meal patterns elsewhere taking place on Saturday evenings, the beginning of Sunday in Jewish reckoning after the Sabbath was over (Bradshaw and Johnson 2011: 3–24). By the middle of the second century, Sunday is increasingly becoming *the* Christian day for the liturgical assembly. Several New Testament terms and other designations become closely attached to it: the 'Lord's Day'; the day of 'resurrection'; the day of 'encounter' with the risen Lord through Word and meal; the 'day of light' (as the first day of creation now associated with the 'light' of Christ); the 'eighth day' (i.e., the day of *new* creation beyond the seven-day cycle); and the day of the 'epiphany'

Figure 20.5 A fresco of a veiled woman in an act of prayer, from the Catacomb of Saint Callistus, second half of the third century CE. Photo: Wilpert (1903: Plate 88)

or manifestation of the Church. As neither the *Christian* Sabbath nor a 'little Easter,' Sunday becomes not the commemoration of a past event, such as the resurrection, but the icon of ongoing and present 'communion' with the risen Lord.

Christians of the first three centuries also knew an annual feast called *Pascha* as the celebration of Jesus' death and resurrection. Recent scholarship has argued that the most primitive celebration of *Pascha* (possibly reflected already in the New Testament itself) was an all-night vigil held by Christians in Asia Minor on 14 Nisan, the day of Passover in the Jewish calendar and the day of Jesus' death according to the New Testament (and the equivalent of either March 25 or April 6, according to some early calendars), which culminated in the celebration of the Eucharist at 3:00 am (Talley 1986: 1–32; Bradshaw and Johnson 2011: 39–74). Eschatological in orientation as a vigil

awaiting the return of the Lord, the overall emphasis of this 'Quartodeciman' ('fourteen') *Pascha*, assuming that *Pascha* had been derived from *paschein* ('to suffer'), was the death of Christ, the true Paschal Lamb, and there is no record of baptisms ever having been part of the celebration. The fourth-century historian Eusebius describes a second-century 'paschal controversy' between these 'Quartodecimans' and Rome over whether or not the *Pascha* was to be celebrated on a calendrical date or at a Saturday to Sunday vigil *after* the Jewish Passover, a practice presumably followed by churches elsewhere (Egypt and Jerusalem). Although this question was not completely resolved until the Council of Nicea (325 CE), the Sunday celebration of *Pascha*, preceded by one, two, or even six days of fasting, would become normative practice by the end of the second century. Along with this, a *Sunday* Paschal celebration, with its natural associations of Jesus' resurrection, and Egyptian theology (Clement and Origen), which interpreted *Pascha* as 'passage,' would suggest eventually that the celebration of *Pascha* itself was not only about the 'passage' of Christ from death to life but Christian participation in this 'passage' through baptism and Eucharist. Hence, in some places (North Africa and Rome), the Paschal Vigil would soon become the prime time for baptism (Bradshaw 1995: 137–47). A nascent 'paschal *triduum*' (primarily fasting from Friday through the end of the vigil), Holy Week (the association of specific days with events in Jesus' last week), Lenten season (at least at Rome and possibly only three weeks in duration), and a fifty-day Paschal season called 'Pentecost' (from *pentēkostē* [*hēmera*] or 'fiftieth day'), in which, like Sundays themselves, both fasting and kneeling were forbidden, are also discernible in this time period, although they are not yet fully liturgicized according to any particular scheme (Talley 1986: 33–7; Bradshaw and Johnson 2011: 69–74).

Traditional scholarship assumed that the other annual feasts of Epiphany (January 6) and Christmas (December 25) were fourth-century innovations brought about by Christian adaptation of various pagan solar festivals, with Epiphany developing as the feast of incarnation in the east and Christmas in the west. Thomas Talley, however, argued that the origins of both are to be located in this pre-Nicene time period (Talley 1986: 79–134), though the case is easier to make for Epiphany than for Christmas, since Clement of Alexandria in the second century (*Stromateis* 1.21) already knows of a celebration of Jesus' 'birth' and/or 'baptism' occurring among some on January 6 (Bradshaw and Johnson 2011: 123–57). Their dates, according to Talley, are based on a deliberate calculation which sought to correlate the date of Jesus' death (March 25 or April 6) with his conception leading to a celebration of his 'birth' nine months later on December 25 (possibly celebrated already in third-century North Africa) or January 6 (the date chosen throughout the east). Such calculation, Talley argued, corresponds to an ancient practice that related the death days of illustrious people, including even the Patriarchs of the Hebrew Bible, with their birth days since their lives were thought to have had an exact number of years. While it is probably true that the principal focus of such feasts was a unitive celebration of Jesus' 'beginnings,' i.e., his birth and/or baptism (Winkler 1994a), Talley suggested that these dates may have been selected for the beginning of an annual course reading of particular Gospels. As such, reading Matthew 1–2 in Jerusalem on January 6, according to the fifth-century *Armenian Lectionary*, would suggest a focus on Jesus' nativity and the visit of the Magi.

The final type of feast to be noted in this period is that of the martyrs, celebrated on the anniversary of their deaths, i.e., their *natalis*, or 'heavenly birthday' (Brown 1981). Intensely local in character, these feasts were tied inseparably to a community's possession of a martyr's tomb, remains, or relics around which the community would assemble. Only later, as relics were 'transferred' to other churches, would the martyr cult spread. As those who had given the ultimate 'witness' in the face of persecution, the martyrs became concrete signs of Christ's own passion and were regularly believed to have been accorded immediate entrance into heaven. Hence, the veneration of the martyrs as faithful disciples of Christ and prayers asking for their intercession also became characteristic emphases.

Worship, practice and belief from the Council of Nicea to the death of Augustine of Hippo

Initiation

As a result of 'mass conversions' in the wake of Constantine's own conversion, the subsequent legalization and eventual adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman empire by the emperor Theodosius, and the trinitarian and Christological decisions of the first ecumenical councils, several changes in the practice of Christian initiation occur during the fourth and fifth centuries. Thanks to the extant catechetical homilies of the great 'mystagogues' (e.g., Cyril (or John) of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, and Theodore of Mopsuestia for the east, and Ambrose of Milan for the west), the practices of Christian initiation in this period are easily reconstructed (Spinks 2006: 38–71, 109–33; Johnson 2007: 115–200; Ferguson 2009: 455ff.). While some local diversity continued to exist, the following came to characterize the overall pattern in the Christian east: (1) the adoption of Paschal baptism and the now forty-day season of Lent as the time of pre-baptismal (daily) catechesis on Scripture, Christian life, and the Creed for the *photizomenoi* (those to be 'enlightened'), although Epiphany, Pentecost, Christmas, and feasts of some saints remained baptismal occasions as well in various churches (Bradshaw 1995); (2) the use of scrutinies (examinations) and daily exorcisms throughout the period of final baptismal preparation; (3) the development of specific rites called *apotaxis* (renunciation) and *syntaxis* (adherence) as demonstrating a 'change of ownership' for the candidates; (4) the development of ceremonies like the solemn *traditio* and *redditio symboli* (the presentation and 'giving back' of the Nicene Creed); (5) the reinterpretation of the once pneumatic pre-baptismal anointing as a rite of exorcism, purification, and/or preparation for combat against Satan; (6) the rediscovery and use of Romans 6 as the dominant paradigm for interpreting the baptismal immersion as entrance into the 'tomb' with Christ; (7) the introduction of a post-baptismal anointing associated with the gift and 'seal' of the Holy Spirit; and (8) the use of Easter week as a time for 'mystagogical catechesis' (an explanation of the sacramental 'mysteries' the newly initiated had experienced).

Although a similar overall pattern also existed in the west, western sources display some significant differences. Ambrose of Milan, for example, witnesses to a post-baptismal rite of foot-washing (*pedilavium*) as an integral component of baptism (Whitaker and Johnson 2003: 180–1). Some sources from Rome (e.g., the *Letter of John the Deacon to Senarius*; Whitaker and Johnson 2003: 208–9) and North Africa (Augustine; Whitaker and Johnson 2003: 145) indicate the presence of three public scrutinies (including even physical examinations, Johnson 2007: 187) held on the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent. And, thanks to an important fifth-century letter from Pope Innocent I to Decentius of Gubbio (Whitaker and Johnson 2003: 206), it is clear that in Rome itself the pattern of episcopal hand-laying with prayer and second post-baptismal anointing, noted already in the *Apostolic Tradition*, was understood as an essential aspect and was associated explicitly with the bishop's prerogative in 'giving' the Holy Spirit.

The adoption of several of these ceremonies for the preparation and initiation of candidates was, undoubtedly, the result of the Church seeking to ensure that its sacramental life would continue to have some kind of integrity when, in a changed social and cultural context, where Christianity was now favored by the emperor, authentic conversion and properly motivated desire to enter the Christian community could no longer be assumed. Indeed, as the experience of Augustine himself demonstrates (*Confessions* 1.11), it became common in some places to enroll infants in the catechumenate and then postpone their baptism until much later in life, if ever. Similarly, as the rites themselves take on numerous elements that heightened dramatically the experience of those being initiated, the overall intent was surely to impress upon them the seriousness of the step they were taking (Yarnold 1994: 59–66).

It is not, however, only the baptismal candidates who regularly experienced this process. Egeria, the late fourth-century Spanish pilgrim to Jerusalem, records in her travel diary that, along with the candidates and their sponsors, members of the faithful also filled the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (Figure 20.6) for the daily catechetical lectures of the bishop. 'At ordinary services when the bishop sits and preaches,' she writes, 'the faithful utter exclamations, but when they come and hear him explaining the catechesis, their exclamations are louder . . . and . . . they ask questions on each point.' Further, during the week of mystagogy she notes that the applause of

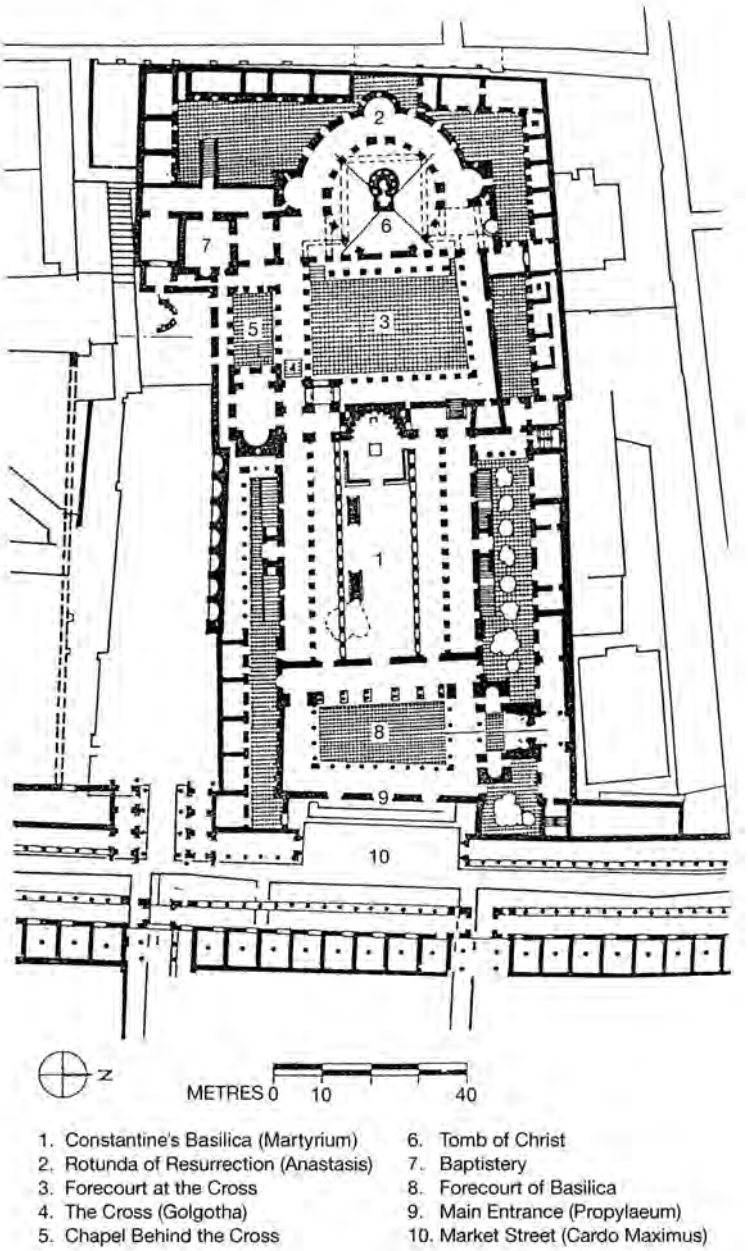

Figure 20.6 The Holy Sepulchre Complex, Jerusalem, in the fourth and fifth centuries CE. From Baldovin 1989; reproduced by permission of the author

the newly baptized and faithful 'is so loud that it can be heard outside the church.' Because of this, she states that 'all the people in these parts are able to follow the Scriptures when they are read in church' (Wilkinson 2006: 162–3).

Designed for adult converts, the ritual process of Christian initiation in these several sources was to be short-lived, due, in part, to its success in 'converting' the masses. The North African controversy between 'Pelagianism' and Augustine over the long-standing practice of infant initiation, and Augustine's theological rationale for infant initiation based on a theology of 'original sin,' however, will lead to the catechumenate's further decline. At the same time, Augustine's lengthy battle with 'Donatism,' over the Donatist practice of 'rebaptizing' Catholics and their insistence on the moral character of the baptizer in assuring the valid administration of baptism (see Chapters 44 and 58 of this volume), will lead also to an 'orthodox' sacramental theology based on the use of proper elements and words with Christ himself underscored as the true sacramental minister. If Augustine himself knew an initiation rite similar to those summarized above (Harmless 2014), his own theological emphases, born in the heat of controversy, would set the agenda for a later western-medieval sacramental minimalism focused on 'matter' and 'form,' the '*quamprimum*' ('as soon as possible') baptism of infants, and an objective sacramental validity ensured by an '*ex opere operato*' understanding.

Eucharist

'Nowhere did the post-Constantinian transformation of the scale of worship have a greater impact than on the eucharist' (Baldovin 1991: 168). The shift from domestic to public space, signified by the adaptation of existing, and the imperial funding of, basilicas and shrines (Figure 20.7), made possible the accommodation of large 'crowds' within Christian liturgical assemblies. So also the rites themselves expanded precisely at those points where greater order in the assembly was needed (i.e., at the entrance of clergy and community, at the presentation or transfer of the Eucharistic gifts to the altar, and at the distribution of communion) with the result that diaconal directions (e.g., 'let us stand,' 'let us kneel,' etc.), litanies, psalmody, chants, and prayers become regular elements. Documents (*Apostolic Constitutions* 8 and Egeria) also show that various categories of non-communing people, for example, catechumens, *photizomenoi*, and penitents preparing for reconciliation, were regularly dismissed from the assembly with rites that included hand-laying and prayer before the Eucharist proper began. In one of his homilies, John Chrysostom laments not only

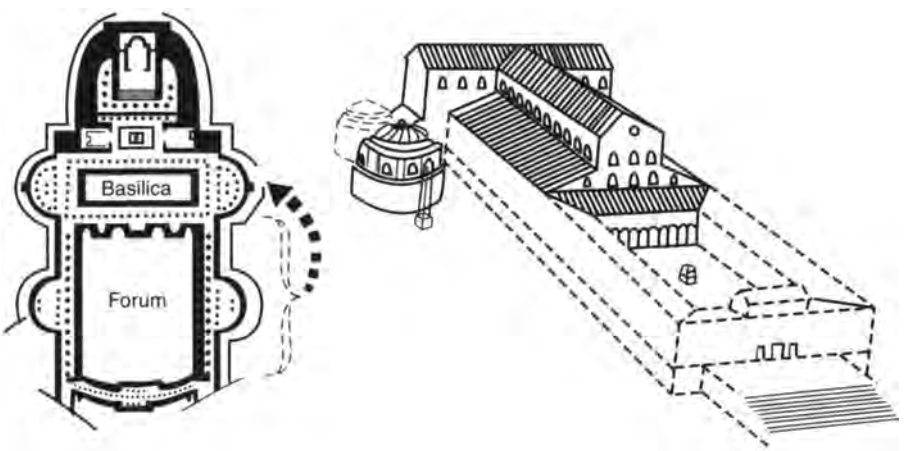

Figure 20.7 Illustration of Trajan's Forum and Old St. Peter's, Vatican City, by Armando Garzon-Blanco, from Chiat and Mauck 1991: 102. Reproduced with the permission of Marchita Mauck and the University of Notre Dame Press

that the liturgical assemblies are now filled with gossipers, revelers, and pickpockets but that even several of the faithful are leaving before the Eucharist, and, as a result, various dismissal rites for them are also added (Taft 1986b: 29–60; Bradshaw and Johnson 2012: 64–7). In the west, such *missa* or dismissal rites would eventually suggest the term *missa* or 'mass' for the Eucharist itself.

If Eucharistic liturgies expanded at these points, however, they tended to contract at others. In the liturgy of the Word, for example, the number of biblical readings would gradually be limited to two in most traditions, and, generally, both would be from the New Testament. Nevertheless, preaching itself was anything but neglected. Eastern sources for this period indicate that *several* homilies would regularly be given at the Sunday Eucharist, with any presbyters present preaching first and the bishop last (Bradshaw 1983: 17).

By far, one of the most significant developments in this period was the standardization of written texts of the anaphora, a process closely related to the need for liturgical texts to express orthodox teaching against trinitarian and Christological heresy, and, undoubtedly, to the increasing lack of proficient and prayerful extemporizers (Bouley 1981). Along with this, although the precise origins of their anaphoral use remains debated, the *sanctus* hymn of Isaiah 6 (Spinks 1991; Taft 1991/1992; Winkler 1994b, 1996), the institution narrative and its accompanying anamnetic offering language (Cutrone 1990: 105–14), even 'consecratory' *epicleses* of the Holy Spirit, and numerous intercessions now become fixed structural components of these anaphoral prayers resulting from a process of 'cross-fertilization,' i.e., the borrowing of elements across ecclesial boundaries (Fenwick 1986). The integration of these elements into specific anaphoras results in the classic anaphoral patterns of different traditions called, for example, 'west Syrian,' 'Antiochene,' or 'Syro-Byzantine' (e.g., the anaphoras known as 'St. Basil' and 'St. John Chrysostom'), 'Alexandrian' ('St. Mark'), and 'Roman' (the 'Roman Canon') (see Figure 20.8).

Together with this anaphoral development, a theological concern for 'consecration' of the bread and wine into the *typos*, *antitypos*, *figura*, or *homoioma* of the body and blood of Christ develops further as well. Cyril (John) of Jerusalem attributes this to the activity of the Holy Spirit in the *epiclesis* (Yarnold 1994: 92), and Ambrose of Milan, the first witness to the 'Roman canon,' to the recitation of the words of Christ (the institution narrative) by the priest (Yarnold 1994: 132–3). From this point on east and west will approach the question of Eucharistic 'consecration' from these differing points of view.

Mystagogical teaching on the 'awesome' and 'fearful' nature of Eucharistic participation, as well as non-communing attendance on the part of a now largely 'nominal' Christian assembly, will lead to, and be fostered by, allegorical interpretation of the liturgy itself as a kind of dramatic re-enactment of the life of Christ. Here various liturgical elements (e.g., the transfer of the gifts to the altar and the anaphoral *epiclesis*) become interpreted in relationship to moments in Christ's passion and resurrection (Yarnold 1994: 216). Along with an increased theological emphasis on the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist, a split develops between the liturgy and communion reception to such an extent that the Eucharist becomes almost exclusively a clerical affair and Eucharistic participation becomes focused on individual contemplation of the 'meaning' of the ceremonies and symbols of the rite itself. Aided by the increase of anaphoral intercessions for a variety of different categories of people (living and dead) and other needs, the Eucharist was thus seen increasingly as being 'offered' for those 'needs.' But, to be fair, theology still stressed the 'commemorative' or 'memorial of Christ' aspect of the Eucharistic 'sacrifice' (Bradshaw and Johnson 2012: 129–36), and for that matter, in spite of the preponderance of offering language in the 'Roman canon' the principal understanding even there is that of the Eucharist as the Church's great 'sacrifice of *praise*' (Jasper and Cuming 1987: 164).

Daily prayer

During this period, the patterns for daily prayer within the first three centuries evolve into different types of daily, public, communal prayer at morning and evening. Thanks to the seminal work of Anton Baumstark (1958), two types stand out with great clarity: *cathedral* and *monastic*. 'Cathedral

Antiochene/West Syrian/ Syro-Byzantine	*Alexandrian*	*Roman*
('St Basil/St John Chrysostom')	('St Mark')	('Roman Canon')
Dialogue	Dialogue	Dialogue
Preface (invariable)	Preface (invariable)	Preface (variable by feast and/or season)
	Intercessions	
Sanctus/Benedictus	Sanctus	Sanctus/Benedictus
Post-Sanctus		Post-Sanctus (*Te igitur*, *Memento Domine*, *Communicantes*, *Hanc igitur*)
	Epiclesis I	*Quam oblationem*
Institution narrative	Institution narrative	*Qui pridie* (Institution narrative)
Anamnesis (memorial)	Anamnesis (memorial)	Anamnesis (*Unde et memores*, *Supra quae*)
Epiclesis	Epiclesis II	*Supplices te*
Intercessions		Intercessions (*Memento etiam*, *Nobis quoque*, *Per quem*)
Final doxology	Final doxology	Final doxology

Figure 20.8 Anaphoral structures in east and west[2]

prayer,' so named because of the variety of ministries employed in its performance and on account of its interpretation as the priestly prayer of the whole Church in praise and intercession, made use of a number of 'select' elements and 'popular' ceremonies. The core of morning prayer was the daily use of Psalms 148–150 and either Psalm 63 or 51, and evening prayer regularly used the hymn *Phōs Hilaron* to accompany an evening ritual of lamp-lighting (*lucernarium*)—the ultimate origins also of the candle lighting and *Exsultet* of the Easter Vigil liturgy—as well as Ps. 141 (east) and Ps. 105 (west). Various litanies and lengthy prayers of intercession were regular components of both 'offices' and neither the reading of Scripture nor homilies were generally included. By the end of the fifth century, daily offerings of incense also become characteristic (Taft 1986a: 31–56).

The 'monastic' type of daily prayer had its origins among the growing ascetical communities in the deserts of Egypt and Syria. If praise and intercession characterized the cathedral office, the emphasis in the monastic office was on meditation and contemplation geared toward spiritual perfection in the monastic life. Whether prayed alone in cells or in community, the content of the monastic office was the psalms, recited (or sung by a soloist with some communal response) in their biblical order, alternating with periods of silence, prostrations, and concluding prayers (John Cassian, *Institutes* 2 and 3), and lengthy Scripture readings oriented toward the goal of 'ceaseless' contemplative prayer (Taft 1986a: 57–73).

The influence of monasticism on ecclesial life in general during this period has profound consequences for the cathedral office. Not only were many of the leading bishops of this period monks themselves, but the development of 'urban' monasteries closely connected with local churches will

lead to a 'mixed office' that combined both cathedral and monastic elements as well as the retention of the early pattern of prayer at the third, sixth, and ninth hours and at various intervals during the night (Taft 1986a: 75–140). One of the best examples of this 'mixed office' in the west, is the influential *Rule of St. Benedict*, where morning prayer (*lauds*) is essentially a 'cathedral office,' with much of the same psalmody assigned to every morning (e.g., Psalms 67, 51, 148–150), and evening prayer (*vespers*) a 'monastic office,' with Psalms 110–147 constituting a recurring weekly *cursus* recited in order, with four of these psalms assigned to each evening (Fry 1982: 42–6). In addition, while some non-biblical hymns make their appearance in the Eucharistic liturgy during these centuries in the east, the majority of early Christian hymns, including even the *Gloria in Excelsis* (*Apostolic Constitutions* 7), have their origins in this context of daily prayer. When, for example, Augustine describes the corporate singing at Ambrose's cathedral in Milan (*Confessions* 10), it is quite likely that what he refers to is some form of the 'Ambrosian' office hymns.[3]

Liturgical year

If these other rites achieve their 'classic' forms in these centuries, so too does the liturgical year become organized into its traditional fixed pattern. Together with the Nicene decision on the date for *Pascha* (i.e., the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox) and the widespread adoption of Paschal baptism, so also a forty-day 'Lent,' probably as a synthesis of the Alexandrian post-Epiphany, forty-day period of baptismal preparation and fast with other pre-paschal and/or pre-baptismal preparation periods elsewhere (Johnson 1995b: 118–36; Bradshaw and Johnson 2011: 99–113), makes its universal appearance as a time for the final preparation of baptismal candidates and penitents, and ascetical preparation for the faithful. Here as well, a fully developed Holy Week and 'Paschal *Triduum*' is to be noted, with Egeria witnessing to a 'Palm Sunday' procession of palms and a Good Friday rite which included both the reading of John 18–19 and the veneration (kissing) of a relic of the cross, a relic closely guarded by deacons to ensure that none of the 'faithful' would bite off a portion and steal it (Wilkinson 2006: 155). Both celebrations would move from Jerusalem to the west, although at Rome 'Palm' Sunday would remain the day for the reading of the Matthean Passion (Matt. 26–27) and only in the Middle Ages would it acquire the palms procession. In none of the early traditions did Holy (Maundy) Thursday evening or Good Friday include a celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy. Rather, the Paschal fast itself began on Thursday evening and the celebration of the Eucharist was seen as incompatible with fasting.

The 'fifty days' of the Easter celebration also become fully liturgicized during these centuries, corresponding to the chronology of Luke-Acts. Although Pentecost Sunday was, originally, a unitive celebration of Jesus' Ascension and the gift of the Holy Spirit, by the beginning of the fifth century, the fortieth day of Easter has become the *feast* of the Ascension and Pentecost the *feast* of the Holy Spirit. In spite of an earlier tradition that forbade fasting and kneeling during the 'fifty days,' some western churches resumed both practices in the time between Ascension and Pentecost (Cabié 1965).

The western celebration of Christmas on December 25 and the eastern celebration of Epiphany on January 6 are adopted universally during these centuries. Whatever the ultimate origin of the dates for these feasts, influenced, undoubtedly, by the continuing popularity of the pagan solar cults and a concern for Christological orthodoxy, Christmas becomes the universal feast of the incarnation *par excellence* and, at least in the east, Epiphany becomes limited to the celebration of Jesus' baptism. Although Jesus' baptism forms the content of Epiphany in some western traditions as well, at Rome Epiphany focused on the visit of the Magi as the manifestation of salvation to the Gentiles. A season of preparation for these feasts also begins to make its appearance in some sources, but the full development of 'Advent' itself is a later phenomenon (Bradshaw and Johnson 2011: 123–68).

The filling out and universalizing of the 'sanctoral' cycle is also a characteristic of this period as relics of the martyrs and their cult now become increasingly 'transferred' to other churches. Together with martyr feasts, this period also witnesses to the inclusion on local liturgical calendars of influential bishops

and ascetics as exemplary models of faith. Biblical saints, especially the Virgin Mary, after the proclamation of the *Theotokos* doctrine at the Council of Ephesus (431 CE), make their appearance as well. Often connected to the building and dedication of churches in her honor, the feasts of 'Mary Theotokos,' later her 'Dormition' (August 15), her 'Nativity' (September 8), the 'Annunciation' (March 25), and the 'Presentation' of Christ to Simeon and Anna (February 2) are well in place by the fifth century in the east. All four would be adopted subsequently by Rome, and, with the addition of a *Roman* feast on January 1, commemorating the *Theotokos* decree of Ephesus, would remain the only Roman 'Marian' feasts until the fourteenth century (Cabié 1986: 130–8; Bradshaw and Johnson 2011: 171–214).

Traditional scholarship argued that the concern for dates, the multiplication of feasts, and the development of Holy Week in this period is the result of a new 'historicizing' mentality which replaced an earlier eschatological orientation (Dix 1945: 303–96). But, in underscoring the concern for dates even in the pre-Nicene period (e.g., the 'Quartodeciman' *Pascha* and the dates of March 25 and April 6), recent research has suggested that there is no necessary contradiction between 'history' and 'eschatology' and, thus, there is no reason to posit a new mentality to account for these developments (Taft 1984: 15–30; Talley 1986: 1–32; Baldovin 1987: 102–4). Rather, in places like Jerusalem, it would be natural to expect that Christians would want to visit the holy places and to celebrate there the events associated in Scripture with Christ's life. Especially with the imperial funding and building of basilicas at those places, such development was inevitable.

Conclusion

The story of Christian worship, practice, and belief in the first five centuries of the common era is one of development, change, accommodation, and adaptation. From diverse and multiple origins and theologies, the Church emerged at the end of this period with a rather homogenous liturgical structure, style, and theological interpretation. If some important and distinctive elements still remained within the various traditions, the challenges of doctrinal heresy and the changed socio-political climate of the immediate post-Constantian era resulted, nevertheless, in relatively similar rites for initiation, Eucharist, daily prayer, and the liturgical year, as well as common perceptions about the meaning of those rites.

At the same time, it should be noted, especially with regard to the challenges of doctrinal heresy, that worship was not only formed by but also helped in forming orthodox Christian teaching. Orthodox trinitarian and Christological doctrine developed, in part, at least, from the Church at prayer, as the baptismal-creedal profession of faith gave rise to the 'official' creeds themselves, as prayer *to* Christ contributed to understanding his being 'homoousios' with the Father, as the Holy Spirit's 'divine' role in baptism shaped the theology of the Spirit's divinity, and as early devotion to Mary as *Theotokos* gave rise to the decree of Ephesus. While 'orthodoxy' means 'right thinking,' such 'right thinking' often developed from the doxology of the Church, where several of these doctrines were prayed liturgically long before they were formalized dogmatically (Johnson 2013).

So it has been ever since. The practice of Christian worship forms the belief of the Church ('*ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*'). In turn, worship itself is formed further by that belief, and, further still, continues to form people into believers and disciples of the crucified and risen Lord.

Notes

1 These images and metaphors include: forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38); new birth through water and the Holy Spirit (John 3:5; Tit. 3:5–7); putting off the 'old nature' and 'putting on the new,' that is, 'being clothed in the righteousness of Christ' (Gal. 3:27; Col. 3:9–10); initiation into the 'one body' of the Christian community (1 Cor. 12:13; see also Acts 2:42); washing, sanctification, and justification in Christ and the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:11); enlightenment (Heb. 6:4; 10:32; 1 Pet. 2:9); being 'anointed' and/or 'sealed' by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 1:21–22; 1 John 2:20, 27); being 'sealed' or 'marked' as belonging to God and God's people (2 Cor. 1:21–22; Eph. 1:13–14; 4:30; Rev. 7:3); and, of course, being joined to Christ through participation in His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3–11; Col. 2:12–15).

2 For texts, see Jasper and Cuming 1987: 114–23 ('St. Basil'); 129–34 ('St. John Chrysostom'); 57–66 ('St. Mark'); and 159–67 ('Roman Canon').
3 On music, see Chapter 36 of this volume and Quasten 1983. For the important contribution which Ambrose made to Christian hymnody, see Chapter 57 of this work.

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21

RITUAL AND THE RISE OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

Risto Uro

Introduction[1]

Ritual has been an understudied theme in the study of Christian beginnings. The early stages of Christianity have been studied intensively from a wide variety of perspectives, but ritual, either as part of any particular method or as a theoretical perspective in its own right, has been a marginal topic in New Testament studies and in the broader field of early Christian studies. The neglect of ritual is striking given the important role the study of ritual has played in some other fields that have often been employed by early Christian scholars, such as Religious Studies/Comparative Religion and social/cultural anthropology. During recent years, however, a number of New Testament and early Christian scholars have begun to draw on the emerging interdisciplinary field of Ritual Studies to shed new light on the history and the world of the early Christian movement (DeMaris 2008; Taussig 2009; Lamoreaux 2013; Turley 2015; Uro 2016; Uro *et al*. forthcoming). This increased interest in the ritual world of early Christianity among early Christian scholars was preceded by pioneering works by a number of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern scholars who engaged themselves in analysing biblical traditions from the perspective of ritual (Gorman 1995; Gruenwald 2003; Klingbeil 2007).

Ritual was ubiquitous in the world in which Christianity was born, as it is in the world in which we live. No human society or culture, past or present, has ever been identified in which rituals are not practised and people could escape them. The analysis of the early Christian world from the perspective of ritual is thus at least as important as the study of literature, social institutions, politics, philosophy, sexuality and many other aspects of early Christian life which have been studied extensively by earlier scholars. Recent advances in the field of Ritual Studies make such a project particularly timely and relevant.

In this chapter, I provide a few examples of how ritual theory can enrich the study of earliest Christianity. Due to the initial stage of research, no systematic account of Christian beginnings from the perspective of ritual can be given. Such an analysis is still probably years away from now (cf. also DeMaris 2008: 5).

Before going into my examples, I provide a survey of how ritual *has* been studied in previous scholarship on Christian beginnings. This is necessary for understanding what ritual theory 'does' in the study of the ancient world. What difference does it make for our historical analyses? I also introduce insights and theories from a subfield of the study of religion dubbed the Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR), which has contributed significantly to the development of ritual theory since the mid 1990s.

Ritual theory and early Christian studies

Although ritual has been – in the grand scheme of things – a marginal topic in the study of ancient Christianity, it has not been totally ignored. Two traditional domains in the study of early Christianity have held interest in ritual. One, the History of Religions School, belongs to a limited time and a specific group of scholars in the history of the discipline, although the School's legacy has exerted influence over many areas of more recent scholarship. The other domain is the study of early Christian liturgy; this in turn is part of the larger field of Liturgical Studies, studying the forms of Christian worship from historical and contemporary perspectives. In addition to these two domains, New Testament scholars applying social-scientific approaches in their work have occasionally taken interest in issues related to ritual, although such analyses have been surprisingly few as compared to other themes discussed by the practitioners of social-scientific interpretation.

History of Religion School

The History of Religion School (HRS) is the name attached to a group of biblical scholars and theologians who studied and taught at the University of Göttingen in the 1880s and 1890s, and who during the decades around the turn of the twentieth century championed a thoroughly historical approach to the study of biblical traditions (Lüdemann and Schröder 1987; Räisänen 2000: 21–41; Baird 2003: 222–53). William Baird summarizes the main emphases and results of the School succinctly:

> [a] focus on religion rather than theology, a concern to view the history of Christianity with the course of the larger history of religion, an emphasis on the history of tradition rather than literary criticism, and a conviction that Christianity was decisively shaped by the impact of foreign religions.
>
> *(Baird 2003: 222)*

The focus on religion rather than on theological doctrine involved an interest in the ritual life of early Christians and its connections with the other cults of the Hellenistic world. The theologians belonging to the History of Religion movement argued for the priority of ritual or 'cult' over philosophical and theological articulations of faith (Lehmkühler 1996: 207–8).

A good example of the appreciation of ritual among the members of HRS is Wilhelm Bousset's celebrated *Kyrios Christos* (Bousset 1970; orig. Bousset 1921). In the preface of the book, Bousset pointed out that 'the present work . . . attempts to take its point of departure from the practice of the cultus and of the community's worship and to understand the way things developed from this perspective' (1970: 11). For Bousset, the confession of Jesus as 'Lord' (*Kyrios*) represented a major Christological innovation among gentile Christians, who supposedly derived the title from pagan cults. Importantly, he argues that the source of this doctrinal development is not to be found in the theological reflections of the earliest Christian leaders, but in the 'Christ cult' of the Hellenistic Christian communities. Bousset described the devotional life of these communities in vivid terms (1970: 134–5), which strikingly remind of the 'effervescence' that according to Durkheim invigorated the collective rituals of the Australian aborigines (Durkheim 2001; cf. Uro 2016: 10–11).

A central tenet of HRS was that early Christianity was decisively shaped by the impact of pagan religions. It was a 'syncretistic' religion. The members of the School were convinced that the genesis of Christianity was influenced by various ideas from Hellenistic and oriental religions. When it came to the 'sacraments' of the early church, they identified the impact of syncretistic Gnosticism, of the Greek mysteries and of Hellenistic religions in both baptism and the Lord's Supper (Eichorn 1898; Heitmüller 1903). Issues of foreign influence or 'syncretism' were theologically sensitive, and the debates around them had a long-standing impact on the study of the religious world of early Christianity and the study of religion more generally.

The keen interest of HRS in the ritual life of the early church was not carried on by the next generation of New Testament and early Christian scholars. In the situation after the First World War, the bold programme of the School was overshadowed by the 'massive rhetoric of dialectical theology' (Räisänen 2000: 41). Bousset's and other advocates of HRS's attempts to study early Christianity from the perspective of ritual is highly commendable, but, in hindsight, we can also see serious shortcomings in the approach of HRS to ritual. To mention but a few, HRS was mainly concerned with the history of *one* religion, Christianity, or, as Hermann Gunkel puts it, 'the history of religion of the Bible' (Gunkel 1927). The School did really promote 'comparative religion', which was in any case at its infancy in the heyday of HRS. Moreover, the School focused on analysing early Christianity as a 'syncretistic' religion, which easily evokes such theological ideas as 'authentic' or 'pure' origins. Today 'syncretism' is largely deemed a useless concept in the study of early Christianity and religion in general (Rudolph 1991; Martin 2000).

History of early liturgy

In his authoritative textbook, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, Paul Bradshaw distinguishes between three traditional methods or approaches applied in the study of early liturgy: the philological, the 'structural' and the 'organic' (Bradshaw 2002: 1–20). By a philological approach, Bradshaw refers to the work of the earliest pioneers of liturgical scholarship who employed 'philological rather than historical methods in their work'. 'They treated liturgical texts like other ancient manuscripts, comparing variant readings and trying to arrive at the original that lay beneath them all' (2002: 3). This original would then represent the most authentic and authoritative form of the liturgical practice under discussion.

The 'structural approach' was advanced by Gregory Dix (1901–52) in his influential book, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (Dix 2005 [orig. 1945]). Dix criticized attempts by earlier scholars to identify a single original Eucharistic rite. According to Dix, 'the genuinely apostolic tradition' behind the centuries of development and widely scattered churches lies in the fourfold 'shape' of the Eucharistic liturgy: the dominical acts of taking, giving thanks, breaking and distributing. Although Dix's work has been largely regarded as a milestone of liturgical history, recent scholarship has emphasized diversity rather than an original common shape of the Eucharistic traditions (see Bradshaw 2002: x, 6, 140). As McGowan puts it, 'an original diversity of Eucharistic practice was inevitable' (McGowan 2010: 183).

The third approach distinguished by Bradshaw is a School in Liturgical Studies that was prompted by Anton Baumstark's *Comparative Liturgy* (Baumstark 1953, 1958). Baumstark's comparative approach was an ambitious attempt to analyse the history of liturgy as a matter of 'organic' development, by carrying out systematic comparison and classification, and by identifying the universal principles or 'laws' that governed the process of the historical evolution of liturgical traditions. *Comparative Liturgy* has exerted a continuing influence on the philological and historical study of liturgical sources (Taft and Winkler 2001). In spite of its early roots in the comparative methodologies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the comparative approach has not led scholars of liturgy to consider insights from ritual theory or to develop their work toward genuinely cross-cultural approaches. Comparative liturgists have mainly focused on the various forms of the Christian liturgy (or its assumed roots in Jewish synagogue worship), understood as an organic whole.

More recent developments in the study of early liturgy have been characterized by increasing historical criticism, emphasis on diversity of practices and a more cautious attitude toward making inferences from liturgical sources as to actual practices (Bradshaw 2002: 14–20; McGowan 2010). In the first two decades of the new millennium, many historians of liturgy have shifted from mere textual comparisons toward an analysis of the *cultural and social contexts* of early Christian rituals. This trend is in line with approaches in mainstream New Testament and early Christian Studies, in which the importance of studying the 'social world' of early Christianity (its social institutions, social

structures, cultural norms, economy, etc.) is widely recognized. This shift has also brought liturgical scholars into closer interaction with early Christian scholars and social historians of early Christianity. A particularly fruitful area has been the study of the early Christian ritual meal in the light of Greco-Roman banquet customs and the culture of food in antiquity.

The shift away from an emphasis on mere texts toward the cultural and social context has led liturgical scholars to incorporate research and insights from archaeology, art history, social theory and other fields outside the traditional theological and philological disciplines. Robin Jensen, for example, has developed an innovative approach to baptism, in which she integrates the analysis of early Christian literature with evidence from the visual arts and from the design and decoration of ritual spaces, to understand how the Christian initiation was experienced by early Christians (Jensen 2012). Martin Stringer, a liturgical scholar with a background in social anthropology, has advocated a sociological approach to the history of Christian worship, drawing on Foucauldian discursive analysis and on the theory of practice articulated by Pierre Bourdieu (Stringer 2005). Stringer's work clearly opens up new avenues for the history of Christian liturgy, but it is notable that it does not make any explicit reference to ritual theory.

In recent years, the study of early Christian liturgy has become more pluralistic and interdisciplinary, adopting approaches derived from social history and to some degree from the social sciences, but insights and theories from Ritual Studies have so far been utilized surprisingly little.[2] This is remarkable, considering the conceptual overlap of the key terms 'liturgy' and 'ritual' defining these fields. One explanation for this hesitation to incorporate ritual theory in the history of early liturgy is that Liturgical Studies has been intimately connected to theology, especially practical theology and homiletics (Taft 2001: 228). As Stringer notes, histories of Christian worship have often been written 'from within the tradition itself, for purposes that are closely related to the needs of the church' (Stringer 2005: 5). Ritual theorists, in contrast, often emphasize cross-cultural and anthropological approaches in their work (Post 2015).

Social-science approaches and the emergence of Ritual Studies

Social-scientific theories and approaches have been widely applied to the study of early Christianity since the 1970s and 1980s, but ritual has not been among the major themes and topics investigated by the proponents of the social-scientific methodology. Typical topics examined by the practitioners of social-science approaches have been cultural values, economic systems, group formations, leadership roles, gender, purity, ethnic categories and social identity (see, for example, Esler 1995; Rohrbaugh 1996; Blasi *et al.* 2002; Neyrey and Stewart 2008). Except for the study of purity issues, which usually relies heavily on the work of Mary Douglas (Williams 2010), themes related to ritual and the use of ritual theory have been relatively rare.

Important exceptions for this general bias away from ritual in social-scientific interpretation were *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* by Wayne Meeks (1983) and *A Theory of Primitive Christian Religion* by Gerd Theissen (1999). In both works, ritual was part of a larger theoretical framework for an analysis of the 'social world' of the Pauline Christians (Meeks 1983) or the 'semiotic cathedral', i.e. the cultural sign system constructed by early Christians (Theissen 1999).

Another example running against the general tendency to downplay ritual in the social-scientific study of early Christianity relates to a group of scholars committed to 'redescribing' Christian origins and relying particularly on the work of the theorist of religion, Jonathan Z. Smith. Scholars associated with the group challenge the traditional histories of Christian origins, based on the canonical gospels and the 'mythmaking' of the early communities, and propose that the beginnings of early Christianity can be understood as 'reflexive social experiments' (Cameron and Miller 2004; for an application of the latter idea to early Christian meal practices, see Taussig 2009). Although the emphasis of the 'redescribers' has often been more on the side of myth than on that of ritual, the use of theories of religion gives their approach a special inflection (see, for example, Mack 1996).

A crucial stimulus for adding ritual theory to the toolbox of New Testament/early Christian studies came from the emergence of Ritual Studies as a nameable and interdisciplinary field during the last decades of the twentieth century and onwards (Grimes 1985, 1995, 2014; Post 2015; Stephenson 2015). The identity of Ritual Studies as an independent field or a 'platform' (Post 2015) for the academic study of ritual is at least partly based on the recognition of ritual as an autonomous expression of the human mind, comparable to other domains such as music or arts (Gruenwald 2003: 13–19). Ritual Studies is thus a field that focuses on a sufficiently autonomous domain of human behaviour and culture, incorporating knowledge and methods from various disciplines in the humanities and the sciences; just as, for example, Musical Studies (musicology) investigates music from a host of different perspectives, including the historical, the cultural, the psychological and the performance-related. Before the emergence of Ritual Studies as a recognized interdisciplinary discipline, ritual was studied and theorized under a number of different disciplines, such as anthropology, Comparative Religion, theology, psychology and biology.

Cognitive theories of ritual

The emergence of CSR was a partly parallel phenomenon with the rise of Ritual Studies as an independent field of research. CSR grew out of the collaboration among religion scholars, anthropologists, philosophers and psychologists in the 1990s (Barrett 2011; Pyysiäinen 2012). Today, the movement spans a host of different research areas, approaches and disciplines, in which the evolutionary and cognitive roots of religious thinking and behaviour have become foci of interest. The cognitive approach has gained currency among historians of religion and archaeologists (Whitehouse and Martin 2004; Martin and Sørensen 2011). Biblical scholars have also been active in developing cognitive approaches to the study of biblical texts and their religio-cultural contexts (Luomanen *et al.* 2007; Shantz 2009; Kazen 2011; Roitto 2011; Czachesz and Uro 2013; Czachesz 2017).

Ritual theories have been an important part of the emerging cognitive movement within Religious Studies. Several theories of ritual have been advanced and subjected to empirical testing. These theories represent different schools and currents in the cognitive programme (Uro 2016: 41–70) and deal with a variety of questions: for example, how religious rituals are mentally represented in the minds of the participants, why people universally engage in seemingly counterproductive ritual behaviours, and how rituals support the transmission of religious traditions (for an introduction to the cognitive theories of ritual, see Uro 2016: 31–9, 64–9). Scholars of early Judaism and early Christianity have begun to develop these theories and insights into tools for the study of their own materials (Uro 2007, 2011, 2016; Biró 2013; Jokiranta 2013; Czachesz 2017). It can be argued that the cognitive approach is one driving force that is impelling ritual from the margin toward a more central place in the agenda of biblical scholarship.

A cognitive approach to early Christian ritual is interesting because it goes beyond the 'surface' level of ritual on which its diverse socio-cultural functions and interpretations can be observed, and focuses on the deeper level of cognition and, thus, helps us to analyse early Christian practice as *human behaviour* conditioned by the general architecture of the mind. Adopting a cognitive approach does not, however, mean that one denies the significance of social and cultural factors in the study of early Christian rituals (for an argument for a 'socio-cognitive approach', see Uro 2016).

Ritual and the rise of Christianity: examples

The latter part of this chapter discusses two examples which illustrate the relevance of ritual approach to understanding the earliest developments of the Christian movement. The examples deal with (1) the role of John the Baptist as a ritual entrepreneur, and (2) the meal as a context of early Christian ritual life, especially in the light of the evidence in 1 Corinthians. These case studies aim to demonstrate that ritual theory and cognitive theories of ritual in particular shed new light on issues discussed by early Christian scholars as well bring new questions to the fore.

John the Baptist's ritual invention

John, a contemporary of Jesus of Nazareth, was remembered for his performance of a rite (*baptisma*) in which a ritual patient was immersed in water. This practice produced his epithet 'Baptist' or 'Baptizer' (*baptistēs*), used by the first three Evangelists and by the Jewish historian Josephus (*Ant.* 18.116). John's reputation as a promulgator of a special rite that became associated with his name prompts a question of what role his ritual practice played in the formation of his movement, and consequently in its offshoot, the Jesus movement. For one thing, John and early Christians attached varied theological meanings to the rite. For example, Paul addressed the meaning of baptism theologically in Rom. 6:3–5:

> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his (RSV).

This passage led to the construction of cruciform baptismal fonts across the Christian world, so that the baptizand literally descended into the cross as he or she entered the water (see Figure 21.1).

Although scholars of early Judaism and early Christianity have written a number of detailed analyses of the meaning and function of John's rite in its religious-cultural setting (Ernst 1989: 320–46; Webb 1991: 163–214; Taylor 1997: 49–100), they have seldom used resources from ritual theory to enrich their historical analyses. How do ritual inventions, such as John's immersion, function as catalysts for new movements? What exactly was the 'speciality' of John's ritual performance?

One way to approach the issue is to leave aside, for a moment, the socio-cultural meanings and functions of John's rite and to focus on its formal characteristics. Whatever interpretations

Figure 21.1 Cruciform baptismal font near the Octagonal Church, Philippi. Photo Philip Esler

or functions we assume for John's immersion, the most distinctive feature of it as compared to other water rituals in Second Temple Judaism (Lawrence 2006) has to do with its formal structure. Unlike other Jewish ritual washings, which were self-administered, John's rite involved a ritual agent acting upon a ritual patient (baptizand). This difference has of course often been recognized by scholars (see, for example, Webb 1991: 180), but without ritual theory its implications have remained unexplored. A theory that is particularly helpful here is T. E. Lawson and R. N. McCauley's Theory of Ritual Competence, also referred to as Ritual Form Theory (Lawson and McCauley 1990; McCauley and Lawson 2002).

Lawson and McCauley argue that irrespective of social functions or verbal interpretations offered by ritual participants, religious rituals are mentally represented as *actions* in which somebody (agent) is doing something to somebody (patient), often by means of something (instrument). As they put it, 'ritual drummers ritually beating ritual drums are still drummers beating drums' (McCauley and Lawson 2002: 10). The difference from ordinary actions is that in religious rituals 'culturally postulated superhuman agents' (CPS agents) are associated with one of these action roles (agent, instrument or patient). This account may sound trivial for a scholar of early Christianity who is interested in finding the theological and cultural meaning of the text under study, or as in this case, of the practice described in the text. But Lawson and McCauley's theory has some interesting implications which have a bearing on the issue of how rituals or ritual innovations play a role in the emergence of a movement.

A central concept in Lawson and McCauley's theoretical construction is a ritual profile they call 'special agent ritual'. By this they refer to rituals in which CPS agents are primarily associated with the agent of the given ritual (vs. 'special instrument' and 'special patient rituals', in which CPS agents are associated with the instrument or the patient of the ritual). In terms of Lawson and McCauley's theory, John's immersion can be described as a special agent ritual. In a structural account of the ritual, a CPS-agent is primarily associated with the agent of the ritual, i.e. with John, a God-sent prophet (Matt 11:9/Luke 7:26), or with someone who has received a baptism from him (cf. John 3:26).

The most interesting part of Lawson and McCauley's theory involves the predictions they formulate as to how a ritual's profile will determine the participant's intuitive judgements concerning the ritual's properties. They hypothesize, among other things, that special agent rituals are sensed as more powerful and generate higher emotional arousal than special instrument/patient rituals. Rituals in which the agent of ritual action is primarily associated with the agent of a ritual are generally perceived to be stronger and more energizing than rituals with other profiles.[3] This account of special agent rituals is helpful in understanding the role of John's ritual innovation.

Scholars' explanations of John's ritual invention have usually focused on the assumed 'functions' of the rite, for example that it represented a protest against the temple establishment (Webb 1991: 203–5; Wright 1996: 160–1) or that it functioned as an initiation to John's movement (Webb 1991: 197–202; for the problems involved in both interpretations, see Uro 2016: 80–5). The functions discussed by scholars also include the theological explanations given by ancient authors, i.e. Mark's statement that John proclaimed a baptism of repentance 'for the forgiveness of sins' (*eis aphesin hamartiōn*; Mark 1:4) and Josephus' report that John meant his baptism to be 'not for seeking pardon of certain sins, but for purification of the body' (*eph' hagneia tou sōmatos*; *Ant.* 18.117; trans. Webb 1991: 32).

Joan Taylor, who has written perhaps the most extensive analysis of John's immersion rite in the context of Second Temple Judaism, believes that Josephus' report is closer to the original intention of John. According to Taylor, John's rite had to do with purification of the body, not with mediating forgiveness of sins to those who received baptism. Taylor points out that in John's time purification by immersion in water was a cultural truism; everyone knew that was what an immersion was about (1997: 94). But she also recognizes that there was something 'novel or extraordinary' in John's activity, as otherwise he would not have earned his title of 'Immerser' (1997: 94). Taylor suggests that John's novelty was not so much in his immersion practice as in his teaching that 'previous immersions and ablutions were ineffective for Jews without the practice of true righteousness' (1997: 99–100). You cannot become pure outside unless you are pure inside.

Attempts to find the most plausible interpretation of John's practice in its ancient cultural context are an important part of the historical investigation, but Ritual Competence Theory can enrich such analyses in a number of ways.

First, McCauley and Lawson's claim that special agent rituals can play a significant role in motivating and energizing ritual participants helps us to conceptualize ways in which ritual innovations can influence the rise of religious movements (cf. McCauley and Lawson 2002: 212). Introducing an emotionally strong special agent ritual may be a way to recruit and mobilize new members. There are indeed good reasons to assume John's baptism was an emotionally engaging ritual: it involved the whole body and it centred on the individual ritual patient confessing his or her sins.[4]

Furthermore, the cognitive theory is useful in evaluating interpretations of John's immersion by scholars. For example, Taylor's view that the 'speciality' of John's rite relates only to the ethical prerequisites set by John for his baptism overlooks the ritual structure of John's innovation. According to Ritual Competence Theory, John's special agent ritual would have intuitively been felt to be more powerful than a self-administered ritual purification. This is confirmed by the historical record: people came to John to be baptized *by him*, and his immersion rite gained unprecedented success among his contemporaries. People certainly believed they were receiving *more* by letting John press them down under the water than by immersing themselves in a pool or a river. What verbal interpretations John or his ritual patients attached to this ritual action is irrelevant to an analysis of ritual structure, and the question is best treated as a separate issue.

Finally, a cognitive analysis of John's rite helps us to see why symbolic and cultural analyses, without recognition of intuitive psychological constraints, do not lead to a sufficient account of the role of the ritual in the emergence of John's movement. Assessing various culturally plausible interpretations is important and indeed indispensable in many ways. Such analyses focus on the few extant references and interpretations that have been preserved in our sources (in the Gospels and Josephus), as well as on the wider cultural background (such as ritual bathing in early Judaism). What is important is to realize that such public narrative manifestations have only limited value for explaining people's actual behaviour. This is so at least for three reasons. First, people are not always willing or able to explain why they participate in a ritual (Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994: 100). Second, the reports that have survived may not be representative of the majority of those involved in the movement; they may for example have been randomly preserved, or may derive mostly from the educated elite. The last is almost certainly true of those few explicit interpretations that have been preserved for John's immersion. Third, even if they were representative, they would not necessarily reveal the cognitive processes which trigger the behaviour in the first place, and which play an important role in directing the course of events in the long run (Bloch 2012).

In conclusion, Ritual Competence Theory provides one of the missing pieces in the historical puzzle of John's movement: it explains why his ritual immersion was regarded as so important among the contemporaries of John; the theory also sheds new light on the issue of why it became a model for the type of ritual washing performed by later baptizers in the Jesus movement. To be sure, this particular ritual theory provides only *one* piece in the puzzle and should be complemented with other theories and approaches.

Ritual and early Christian meals

It is generally acknowledged that the ritual life of the earliest Christian communities centred on meals which were held in small 'house churches', i.e. in private houses offered by (relatively) wealthy members of the movement. Early Christian meals have received a considerable amount of attention in recent studies. An important line of research has focused on studying the early Christian meal gatherings in the light of the Greco-Roman banquet customs (Klinghardt 1996; Smith 2003; Taussig 2009; McRae 2011; Smith and Taussig 2012). These studies have brought about important knowledge as to festive dining in the cultural world of early Christianity and highlighted the need to see

early Christian meal practices as part of the larger dining culture in the ancient Mediterranean world. A new consensus has emerged which, among other things, underscores:

- the twofold structure of the festive meal: a supper proper (*deipnon*) was followed by an extended time of drinking, conversation and performance (*symposium*), a libation or series of libations marking the transition from *deipnon* to *symposium*;
- the reclining of the participants or most of the participants;
- the ubiquity of this mode of festive dining: the reclining banquet was a highly influential social institution in the Greco-Roman world (Smith 2012);
- the idealized (utopian) values that were attached to this social practice: in particular, *koinonia* (community), *isonomia* (equality), *philia* (friendship) and *charis* (grace, generosity, beauty) (see Klinghardt 1996; Taussig 2009: 26–32).

Among the scholars who have applied the 'banquet perspective' to early Christian meal practices, Hal Taussig has emphasized the importance of the use of ritual theory in the analysis of Christian origins. Taussig refers to the work of Catherine Bell, Jonathan Z. Smith, Pierre Bourdieu, Victor Turner and Mary Douglas, and contrasts their approaches to the understanding of ritual as 'an esoteric set of gestures or symbols practised by strict adherents to religious or social cults' (Taussig 2009: 55). According to Taussig, the work of these theorists has '(re)focused on the social power of ritual rather the metaphysical, psychological, or institutional meanings of ritual' (2009: 57). 'Ritual is', Taussig writes, 'a kind of social intelligence, often reserved for subject matter that has proved too complex for individual discernment, too frightening for more direct address, or attached to vying long-term social loyalties' (2009: 66).

How do these insights help us to illustrate the meal as a central framework of early Christian ritual life? Taussig's analysis highlights, among other things, the capacity of the meal to construct identities, negotiate about power relations and to create a site for social experimentation. In more concrete terms, he suggests that meals functioned as acts of resistance against imperial power (libations, songs, bread blessings and stories told in the *symposium* evoked the death of Jesus at the hands of Roman authorities) and allowed participants to 'think about' or 'mark' the differences (the reclining of all participants representing different ethnic identities and social statuses both blurred and highlighted the differences).

Although nuanced and moving beyond a straight-forward functionalist explanation, Taussig's theorizing about the 'social power' of the early Christian meal can be lined up with many previous analyses which elaborate 'the Lord's Supper' in Paul (1 Cor. 11: 17–33) as a ritual of solidarity and community-building (Meeks 1983; MacDonald 1988). All such approaches are ultimately indebted to the Durkheimian tradition in the social sciences in which ritual is seen as a (or *the*) basic ingredient of social life (Uro 2016: 128–53).[5] In recent years, ritual theorists have made significant advances in formulating more specifically *how* ritual activities support social coherence and cooperation. One way to conceptualize the issue is to suggest that by taking part in ritual activities people send messages to each other and to themselves. Many theorists propose that such ritual communication is basically about acceptance or commitment. Roy Rappaport, for example, argues that the first of a 'ritual's fundamental offices' is the act of acceptance (Rappaport 1999: 119).

Maybe the most helpful suggestion with regard to ritual communication has been made by theorists who argue that by performing religious rituals people send *honest* signals to each other. An honest signal, these theorists claim, is a signal that is too costly to fake and religious rituals are just such – at least in the perspective of the human evolution (rituals generally involve costs such as time, energetic, materials or physiological costs). The key argument of this Commitment Signalling Theory is that religious rituals promote group cohesion by requiring members to engage in behaviour that is too costly to fake and hence provide an efficient mechanism for overcoming the problem of freeriders (Bulbulia and Sosis 2011). Importantly, Commitment Signalling goes

beyond the standard functionalist explanation by distinguishing a mechanism that operates in ritual's capacity to promote group cohesion and by formulating hypotheses that can be empirically tested (for example, the prediction that costly religious behaviours correlate with group solidarity and longevity; see Sosis and Bressler 2003; Sosis and Ruffle 2003; Ruffle and Sosis 2007).

If we apply the signalling perspective to our information of the early Christian meal gathering in Corinth, we can make at least two observations. First, on a more negative note, it is not easy to determine how the meal itself promoted cooperation and social cohesion, at least beyond what happened in other social contexts in Paul's society. It is obvious that for Paul himself, partaking of 'one bread' and of the 'table of the Lord' (1 Cor. 10:17, 21) was a key symbol of unity, the *ekklēsia* being one social body in Christ. We can conjecture as to practices of sharing food at meals; it is possible, for example, that well-to-do members shared their food with poorer ones (Alikin 2010: 104) or that each member brought his or her own food-basket, albeit not necessarily of equal size and quality (Lampe 1994). Whatever dining protocol the Corinthians followed, Paul's critical comments on their practice show that, against his best intentions, eating caused disunity and division rather than fostering harmony (1 Cor. 11:27–33; cf. also Gal. 2:11–14). While there is no reason to contest 'the power of the banquet to create bonds' in general (Smith 2003: 200), it is difficult to see how exactly these eating practices worked as honest signals, promoting trust and social cohesion in Corinth. Paul's discussion in First Corinthians gives an impression of clashes and tensions between different understandings of the Lord's Supper, rather than of a celebration of unity and mutual love.

Second, if we look for cooperative cues in the Corinthian assembly, the best candidates are the other activities described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11–14 aside from the meal proper, namely music and spiritual gifts, such as prophecy and speaking in tongues. It is now commonly assumed that such ritual activities took place in the *symposium* part of the dinner party, dedicated in antiquity to entertainment, conversation and religious actions. Paul's discussion of the assembly's activities clearly indicates that everyone was free to take part in them. The members are described as bringing contributions to the group's common affairs: 'When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation' (1 Cor. 14:26; NRSV). We can thus assume that the *symposium* part of the gathering was a time especially suitable for cooperative signalling.

Of the two forms of spiritual activity discussed by Paul in 1 Cor. 12–14, glossolalia and prophecy, the nature of the latter phenomenon has been subject to debate. While a few scholars have been eager to make a clear distinction between Christian (Corinthian) prophecy and that involving alternate states of consciousness, comparable to the Greco-Roman mantic oracles (for example, Grudem 1982), others have taken Paul's references to prophecy as evidence of religious ecstasy in Corinth. Shantz, for example, argues that 'privileging of dissociation trance seems to have been an active part of prophetic activity within the major cultures of the Mediterranean', and contends that the Pauline data fit well into that context (Shantz 2009: esp. 189). She sees Corinthian prophecy as a form of spirit possession and draws on Michael Winkelman's cross-cultural category of mediumship (Winkelman 2000).

The evidence in 1 Corinthians is suggestive of high-arousal ritual activities in the Corinthian assembly. Paul's instructions that prophets should not speak simultaneously in the meeting, and that 'the spirits of the prophets are under the control of the prophets' (1 Cor. 14:29–33) indicates that the prophets lacked conscious control while they were prophesying. The implied participation in prophecy as a collective ritual is best understood as being induced by what the psychologists call 'emotion sharing' or 'emotional contagion' (Harmon-Jones and Winkielman 2007: 250–6; Czachesz 2012: 82). The fact that some Corinthian women prophesied with their heads uncovered (1 Cor. 11:2–15) is also informative for our understanding of Corinthian prophecy. Although it is difficult to say what exactly is Paul's concern and argument in the section – for example, whether he is referring to women prophesying unveiled or with their hair loose – it seems clear that the Corinthian practice was somehow inappropriate for Paul, and that he tried to use his intellectual power to redirect their behaviour. Such behaviour could thus be emotionally stimulating and also costly insofar as it also

has to do with the issue of women's honour. Read together with Paul's warning about disorder in the assembly, Paul's discussion in 11:2–15 seems to speak for the view that prophecy involved both emotional arousal and synchrony.

Glossolalia is usually taken as the most striking evidence of emotional arousal in Corinth. Paul's several references to it in 1 Corinthians 12–14 indicate that it was a central and highly valued practice among the Corinthians. Shantz sees it as the 'predominant form of spirit possession' in Corinth (2009: 157). There has been a considerable body of anthropological research on modern tongue speaking. The findings show that many of the basic features of glossolalia are cross-culturally similar and that the phenomenon can be reasonably compared with other traditional forms of non-linguistic speech uttered by religious specialists or members of secret associations in traditional societies (for a survey of the research, see Goodman 2005). On the other hand, it may be difficult to find close parallels to glossolalia in the Greco-Roman culture of Paul (Forbes 1995), lending support to the view that, at least in the form described in First Corinthians, it is a Christian ritual innovation. The references to tongue speaking in the Acts of the Apostles, although misconceived by Luke as xenoglossia in Acts 2:4 (cf. 10:46; 19:6), may be based on recollection of the role it once played in some other early Christian groups as well (Esler 1994: 37–51).

There has been considerable discussion concerning the role of emotions and high-arousal rituals as honest signals, facilitating group cohesion and cooperation. Many signalling theorists have argued that emotions can function as honest signals and thus enhance cooperation. The explanation behind such an assumption is that emotions are generated by the limbic structures of the brain, which are out of conscious control and are thus difficult to 'fake' (Alcorta and Sosis 2005: 333; see also Levenson 2003). It can of course be argued that emotional contagion may make emotions less reliable as signs of a deeper commitment, but then again this psychological mechanism seems to speak in favour of a general human inclination to respond to a performance of emotional rituals with synchrony. Moreover, empirical research has been recently carried out to confirm what anthropologists have claimed for a long time, namely that synchronous activity or collective effervescence produce emotions that weaken the psychological boundaries between the self and the group and contribute to group cohesion. For example, researchers have found evidence that pairs of individuals who mimic each other are more inclined to cooperate than those who do not mimic (Van Baaren *et al.* 2003); it has even been shown that synchrony promotes prosocial actions toward outsiders (Reddish *et al.* 2014). The role of music, singing, dance and rhythmic movement in evoking congruent emotions and generating cooperation is well documented (Anshel and Kipper 1988; McNeill 1995; Alcorta and Sosis 2005; for the role of music in early Christian identity-construction, see Weimer 2015). Researchers have also found support for the view that extreme rituals increase synchrony and cooperation (Konvalinka *et al.* 2011; Xygalatas *et al.* 2013). While prophecy and glossolalia can hardly be characterized as extreme rituals in comparison to such practices as firewalking, they are nevertheless arousing and emotionally salient.

The analysis of the Pauline evidence, especially that in 1 Corinthians 11–14, together with insights from recent studies on ritual, emotion and synchrony, seems to support the view that prophecy and glossolalia, along with other emotional rituals in the Pauline assemblies, functioned as cooperative signals. The commitment signalling perspective to ritual can complement the earlier analyses of Pauline Christianity and early Christian ritual life by offering a more accurate picture of the mechanisms that contribute to social cohesion and cooperation in ritual activity. This picture may also be somewhat more realistic than the earlier ones which have often relied heavily on the rhetoric of Paul or other early Christian writers.[6]

Conclusion

A ritual approach to Christian origins provides new tools for analysing early Christian evidence from a perspective that has been largely ignored in earlier scholarship. Ritual theory integrates several research traditions and fields into a multidisciplinary approach which can enrich and to some degree

also correct the existing accounts of Christian beginnings. This chapter has discussed two examples, John the Baptist's ritual innovation and the role of cooperative signalling in the ritual life of the Corinthian assembly. Future research hopefully generates more systematic accounts of early Christian rituals based on solid theoretical and historiographical work.

Notes

1 This chapter incorporates portions from chapters 2, 3 and 5 in R. Uro, *Ritual and Christian Beginnings: A Socio-Cognitive Analysis* (Oxford University Press 2016). These portions have been reproduced by courtesy of Oxford University Press.

2 This pattern, however, may be rapidly changing. A recent introductory book on the study of liturgy and worship (Day and Gordon-Taylor 2013) includes contributions from historians of liturgy using analytical tools from Ritual Studies (see especially Bradshaw and Harmon 2013; Johnson 2013). Moreover, the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Ritual* relies on collaboration among biblical scholars, ritual theorists and historians of liturgy (Uro *et al.* forthcoming).

3 More specifically, they hypothesize that special agent rituals are generally understood as ones that cannot be repeated ('when gods do things, they are done once and for all'), can be reversed (for example by defrocking priests) and involve sensory pageantry. The prediction that special agent rituals are performed only once for a single ritual patient can be challenged, however, by a significant amount of contradicting evidence (cf. e.g. healing rituals). See the discussion in Uro 2016: 85–9.

4 In the light of the story of Jesus' baptism in the Gospels, which is described as a visionary and auditory experience (esp. Mark 1:9–11; cf. Matt. 3:13–17; Luke 3:31–2; cf. also stories about the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness; Mark 1:12–13; Q 4:1–13), we may even speculate that the ritual triggered an altered state of consciousness among John's followers.

5 Also, Taussig points out that the theorists he is using in his book 'are in substantial debt to Durkheim' (Taussig 2009: 213, n. 7).

6 Cf. Stanley Stowers' criticism that scholarship has generally assumed too much social cohesion and 'groupness' for the Pauline assemblies by using such theologically loaded words as 'church' and 'community' (Stowers 2011).

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22
COMMUNICATION AND TRAVEL

Blake Leyerle

The slowness of communication

In antiquity, news traveled no faster than people. In our age of instantaneous communication, the reality of a world in which a letter from Syria to Rome might spend 100 days in transit (Cicero, *Epistulae ad Familares* 12.10.2) seems almost unimaginable. But to early Christians, a lag between an event and its report was so inevitable that Anthony can attribute the apparent ability of demons to foretell the future to the speedy thinness of their bodies. Having seen a person start out on a journey, or the rains beginning in Ethiopia, they could race ahead and, arriving well in advance of human messengers, astonish people with accurate predictions of an unexpected visit or the flooding of the Nile (*Life of Anthony* 31–2). Holy bodies shared this uncanny agility. After Apa Ammonathas had promised to travel to Alexandria to petition the emperor that monks be exempted from the poll tax, the brothers were 'dissatisfied' when two weeks later (apparently, the expected time for such a trip) they had not seen the old man stir from his cell. But on the fifteenth day, he came to them bearing a letter with the emperor's seal. In response to their query, 'When did you get that, Apa?' he replied, 'That very night I went to the emperor, who wrote this decree, then, going to Alexandria, I had it countersigned by the magistrate.' Hearing this miraculous feat, the brothers were appropriately 'filled with fear' (*Apophthegmata Patrum*, Ammonathas 1 [PG 65. 136–7]). The gift of instantaneous communication was given only to the holy. Sitting on his mountain, Anthony knew the moment that Amun had died, as he saw him being led up to heaven. When the brothers from Nitria arrived with the news thirteen days later, they were stunned to learn that Anthony had already known of Amun's death (*Life of Anthony* 60, cf. Jerome, *Life of Paul* 14). Such stories of exceptional mobility and immediate knowledge simply underscore the expected slowness with which news and people regularly traveled. In the face of this overwhelming physical fact, the bulk of any essay on communication in the late ancient world must focus on travel: its modes, impediments, and facilities.

The reasons for travel

General

Then, as now, people traveled for a variety of reasons. The most conspicuous group of travelers was undoubtedly the military, as any deployment of troops entailed mass movement. Wherever the military went, fleets of vehicles and pack animals followed as well as crowds of servants, grooms,

porters, and women. Careful planning was required to supply the needs of troops on the move (*Hist. August.* Alexander Severus 45.2–3; cf. Ambrose, *Exp. Ps.* 118 5.2). Army recruits journeyed to Rome for induction and assignment to their individual units (Adams 2001: 146–52). The army's constant need for communication ensured that, at any given time, several soldiers in every military unit would be away serving as couriers (Sherk 1974; Austin and Rankov 1995; Kolb 2001: 98–9). Even when not on active duty, individual soldiers traveled and arranged for family members to visit. Tariff inscriptions indicate that soldiers' wives and prostitutes paid higher tolls for their road use, presumably because the state wanted to profit from this group of regular travelers (Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 1.20). When required, military officials traversed the empire to sites of distant operations, but generally preferred to have others do their traveling for them. Thus couriers and minor officials bearing letters, official decrees, reports, and gifts criss-crossed the empire (Bradbury 2004: 73–80).

Business matters spurred other travelers. Given the cost of moving goods overland, large-scale importers and exporters preferred to use shipping routes whenever possible. But the realities of distribution meant that they too had to make regular use of overland routes (Kolb 2000). Small merchants routinely shuttled between their sources of supply and their markets (Horden and Purcell 2000: 342–77). According to Apuleius, trade 'in honey, cheese, and other foodstuffs of that kind used by innkeepers,' kept one man traveling through Thessaly, Aetolia, and Boeotia (*Met.* 1.5). Tollbooth receipts show that donkey and camel caravans regularly traveled through the Western and Eastern deserts in Egypt (Adams 2001: 150; cf. Salway 2001: 26, 59). Effective agricultural exploitation demanded mobility (of goods and people) as well as the use of migrant labor (Suet., *Vesp.* 1; Varro, *Rust.* 1.16; Horden and Purcell 2000: 383–7). Wealthy landlords, like Pliny or his delegates, needed to visit their distant estates on a regular basis (Pliny, *Ep.* 3.19.4; 1.3.2; 9.15.3; 4.14.8). Artisans and entertainers traveled throughout the empire to ply their distinctive trades (Laurence 2001: 169; Grey 2004). Other mobile specialists included mercenaries, pirates, and robbers (Horden and Purcell 2000: 387–8).

Economic and environmental disasters also fed population redistribution, not only through voluntary relocation but also through the practice of debt slavery (De Ste. Croix 1981: 215–16; Horden and Purcell 2000: 388–91). The migrations of Germanic peoples in the fifth and sixth centuries precipitated widespread displacement. The sack of Rome in 410 initiated waves of migration to Africa and the eastern provinces (Jerome, *Ep.* 128.5); and in the sixth century, Africans fled to Spain from their Vandal-occupied homeland (Dietz 2005: 22–3).

Legal affairs often required travel. Manumitted slaves had to present themselves before the provincial governor to receive their official grant of freedom. Every petition, including that of Ammonathas, had to be delivered by hand (Llewelyn 1994: 26–9, 51–7; Bagnall 1993:162–3; Jördens 2011: 233–5). By the later third century, the imperial law courts were no longer stationed in Rome but had become roving entourages (Salway 2001: 59–60); when summoned, a person had to travel to the place of the assizes.

Family matters often prompted travel. Letters from the period suggest that the presence of a large number of ex-patriots in an area ensured a steady flow of potential couriers (Llewelyn 1994: 27–9). The notes they carried back to their hometown often contained requests for further travel: that relatives come to celebrate birthdays and festivals, to attend funerals, or to look after the sick (Adams 2001: 148–50).

For the sake of higher education, promising students traveled to centers of learning (Llewelyn 1998: 117–21; Cribiore 2001: 102–23; Watts 2004: 13–23). For advanced rhetorical instruction, they might go to Athens or Antioch; but for legal training, Beirut was the place. As teachers, they would later travel to lecture or take up positions. The promise of more docile students brought Augustine to Rome, but he was later lured to Milan by the expectation of a more lucrative position (*Confessions* 5.8, 5.13). Research interests in a particular kind of soil prompted Galen to travel to the Greek island of Lemnos (*De simp. med.* 9; Brodersen 2001: 8–9). Sight-seeing was an additional educational privilege enjoyed by the moneyed (Apuleius, *Met.* 2.21; Aelius Aristides, *Oration* 36; Rutherford 2003).

Pausanias recorded his travels around Greece to celebrate his own intellectual discoveries, as well as to provide a guide for other potential travelers (Elsner 1992; Cohen 2001).

Christian reasons for communication and travel

To the reasons that spurred on their Greco-Roman neighbors, Christians added their own, institutionally specific ones. From its foundation by itinerant preachers, missionary activity remained a hallmark of the early church. Once founded, individual churches depended upon on-going travel for material aid and ideological support (1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 7:12; Rom. 15:25–7; Phil. 4:16; cf. Acts 24:17; Thompson 1998). Writing from Corinth to the Christians in Rome, Paul says that he hopes to visit them en route to Spain, but that he must first go to Jerusalem (Rom. 15:24–9). The nonchalance with which he proposes this ambitious itinerary is striking, but even more astonishing is the apostle's assumption that his audience will share his confidence. In addition to his own travels, Paul relied upon emissaries to gather and disseminate news, to encourage and teach—in general, to build up the churches in his absence (Llewelyn 1998: 54–7). Even after church leadership passed into the hands of local bishops, priests, and deacons, clergy continued to travel on missionary voyages.

Other early Christian travel was involuntary. Both Paul and Ignatius were compelled by the state to go to Rome and their death. In response to Decius' legislation in the mid third century mandating universal sacrifice, Cyprian, along with other clergy, fled. His place of exile was no more remote than the suburbs of Carthage, but from that retreat he penned a defense of flight that contained the seeds of a theology for refugees (*De lapsis*). Under the pressure of doctrinal or disciplinary controversy, others had to travel much farther. When Constantine banished Athanasius from Alexandria, he sent him to Gaul, in what was to be only the first of five exiles (Brakke 1995: 8). And when the Egyptian ascetics known to us as the Tall Brothers brought charges against bishop Theophilus, he was compelled to travel from Alexandria to Constantinople to defend himself (Palladius, *Dialogus de vita S. J. Chrysostomi* 7.87–9; Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.15; Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* 8.16).

Yet the congestion occasioned by the press of ecclesiastical travel had been apparent to Ammianus Marcellinus decades earlier, when he complained of the 'throngs of bishops hastening hither and thither on the public mounts' (21.16.18). The need for large numbers of bishops (with various types of assistants) to attend the numerous church councils during this period (see Chapter 32 of this volume) was the spur to much of this traffic (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 3.6; Sotinel 2004).

Among the specifically Christian reasons for travel, pilgrimage merits particular attention. Not that it was unknown in the ancient world: hope had long urged the sick to make their way to healing shrines (Kötting 1950: 33–53; Volokhine 1998; Elsner and Rutherford 2005). When Pliny the Elder's freedman Zosimus started spitting blood, he sent him first to Egypt and then to Fréjus (*Ep.* 5.19). Aelius Aristides traveled to a number of Asclepian shrines in search of 'comfort' from his multiple afflictions—a concept that combined the hope of healing with the balm of religious experience (*Sacred Tales* 2.49–50, 3.6–7, 4.83, 6.1). But in the wake of Constantine's ambitious building program, the phenomenon of Christian pilgrimage increased tremendously in scope and importance (Hunt 1982; Maraval 1985; Wilken 1992). The draw exercised by these shrines is brilliantly captured in the sixth-century mosaic map from Madaba (Figure 22.1), which presents the Holy City as it might have appeared from a high viewpoint in the west in astonishing detail (Donner 1992: 87–94).

While a few pilgrims had come to Palestine 'for prayer and investigation' in the third century (Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.11.12), it was the lure of being 'on the very spot' that brought Egeria to the Holy Land in the following century (*Itinerarium Egeriae* 4.6), and caused John Chrysostom to wish for the leisure and bodily strength to travel to Philippi to see the chains that had imprisoned Paul (*Eph. Homiliae* 8.2). So powerful was this sense of place that Jerome promised Marcella that if she came to Palestine she would see not simply the sites where scriptural events occurred, but the actual events themselves. Together, he assures her, they will 'see Lazarus come forth tied up in winding bands . . . and perceive the prophet Amos sounding the shepherd's horn upon

Figure 22.1 Sixth-century CE mosaic map from Madaba in Jordan with detail of Jerusalem. Photo J. C. N. Coulston

his mountain' (*Ep.* 46.13; see also *Ep.* 108.10). Another anonymous pilgrim made scripture his own by scratching onto a wall in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre the words 'Lord, we came' (compare Psalm 122) under a rough sketch of a typical fourth-century boat (Gibson and Taylor 1994: 25–48; see Figure 22.2).

Many pilgrims traveled in the hope of obtaining tangible blessings. Healing shrines, such as the great complex at Abō Mīnā in Egypt, drew crowds of pilgrims in search of miraculous cures (Grossman 1998).

Figure 22.2 Pilgrim graffito in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem, the Latin inscription reading *Domine ivimus* ('Lord we came'). Photo Zev Radovan/Jerusalem

For others, the goal of pilgrimage was a person rather than a place (Frank 2000). So many visitors traveled to hear 'a word' from the solitaries of Egypt, that Apa Arsenius feared that the sea had become a highway (*Apophthegmata Patrum*, Arsenius 28). But not everyone shared these misgivings. Monastic communities sprang up along the main pilgrim routes precisely in order to supply the needs of these religious travelers (Hunt 1982: 62–6; Hirschfeld 1992: 55–6). In addition to food and lodging (at least for a week according to Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 7), they provided a certain amount of tour guidance (*Itinerarium Egeriae* 12.2–4; Sivan 1990). Such hospitality was inspired by charitable motives, but it was not wholly disinterested. Not only did visitors often contribute alms for the upkeep of the monastery, but pilgrimage had also become an increasingly common prelude to entering a religious community. Many monastics, moreover, continued to embrace periods of wandering as part of their ascetic practice (Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Euthymius*, 14; *Life of Sabas*, 94, 106; Caner 2002; Dietz 2005).

Enabling this growing movement of pilgrims was the vast network of roads and shipping routes established by the Romans to serve their economic and military interests. As all wayfarers shared perforce the same infrastructure of travel, only motivation separated pilgrim from commercial traveler. Indeed it is our earliest pilgrimage account, dated to 333 CE, that provides our best evidence for the state of communications in the empire. Meticulously tracing a step-by-step itinerary, the anonymous pilgrim from Bordeaux notes the distances between cities, changes of horses, and overnight stays from his home to the Holy Land (*Itinerarium Burdigalense*). His route, along with that of five other early Christian pilgrims, Melania the Elder in 373–400, Egeria in 381–4, Paula and Jerome in 385, and Postumianus in *c.* 400, has been conveniently mapped by Hunt (1982: 52; see Figure 22.3).

From their travels, pilgrims usually sent or brought home various mementos: small quantities of soil, rock, or other indigenous produce from the Holy Land (Leyerle 2008). Flasks, often decorated, of blessed water or oil were especially popular (Davis 1998; Vikan 2010: 23–44). Not simply souvenirs, these objects shared in the power of the land, and thus were widely believed to have protective and beneficent powers. Serving as religious sights in their own right for non-travelers back home, they no doubt stirred in others the desire to take to the road (Leyerle 1996).

Social networking and travel

The result of all this movement was enhanced communication, as far off people were brought into contact. So common was it, indeed, for settlements to spring up along roadways that vanished roadways can now be reconstructed from patterns of human settlement (Chevallier 1976: 43, 117; Isaac and Roll 1982: 90–2). But social networks were not simply the result of travel; they were equally often its cause. The application of social network theory to early Christianity has illuminated the extent to which pre-existing bonds of kinship, friendship, and patronage encouraged people to travel, write letters, and send gifts (Clark 1992; White 1992). By serving as couriers, new people were introduced into the network, and their belonging was then cemented through reciprocated hospitality. As friends of friends developed independent relationships, the web of communication grew sturdier and more complex. At every step, the astonishingly dense communication network created by early Christianity was dependent upon the movement of bodies, whose mobility was in turn enabled by a vast web of roads and shipping routes that linked the distant outposts of the empire.

The experience and infrastructure of travel and communication

Travel by land

At the height of the empire, some 200,000 miles of graveled or paved highways linked the disparate provinces to Rome (Forbes 1955: 138; Quilici 2008; Talbert 2010: 7–93). As we would expect, the quality of these roads varied tremendously. Main routes were always better

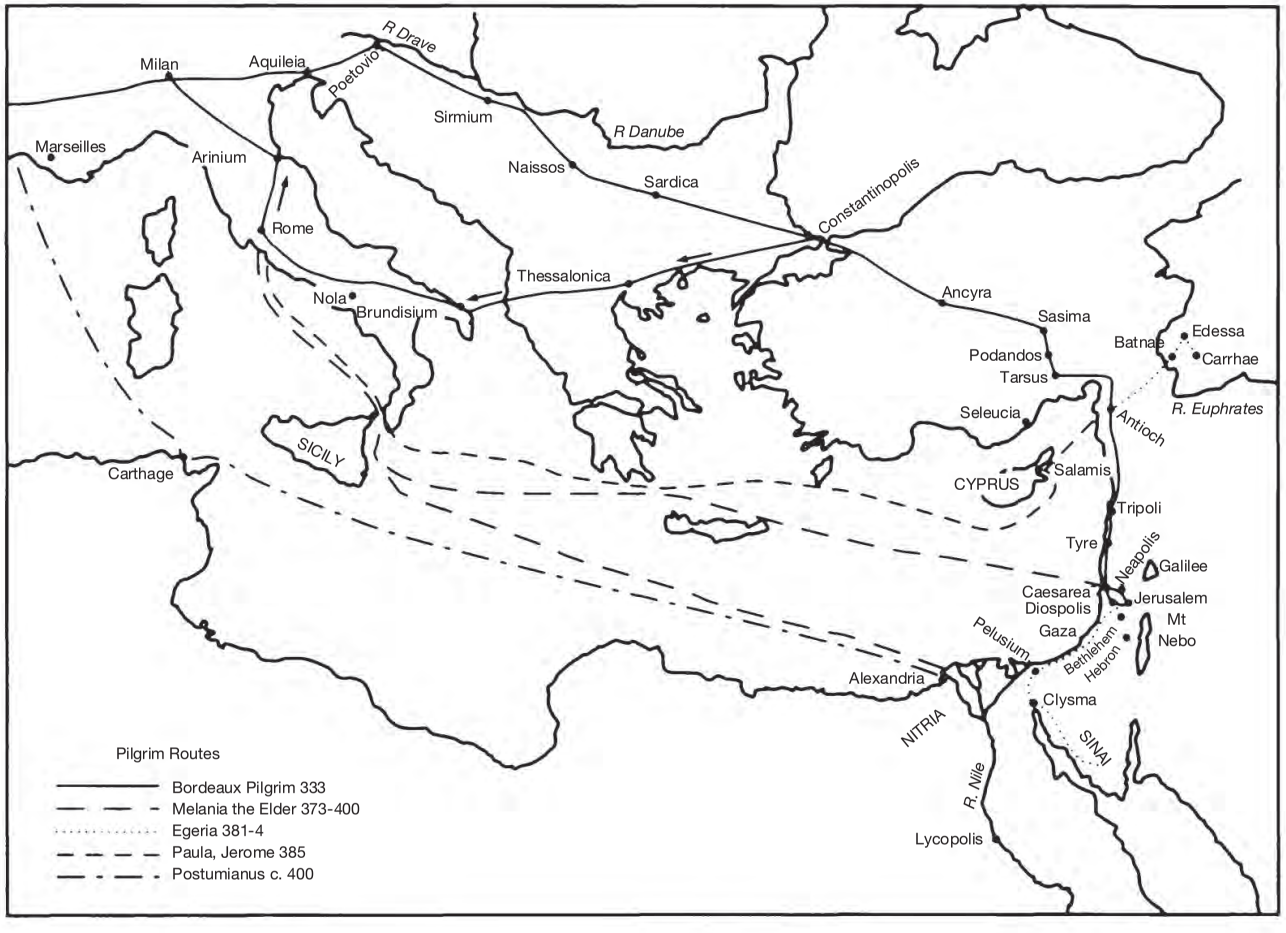

Figure 22.3 Map of major pilgrim routes to the Holy Land in the fourth century. From Hunt (1982: 52), by permission of the Clarendon Press, Oxford

constructed and maintained than secondary paths. But even stretches of the same road showed considerable variation, since construction techniques always had to be accommodated to local materials (Chevallier 1976: 106–21, 131–77).

The majority of routes were simply graveled paths. Under dry conditions, these were perfectly adequate, but in poor weather they might turn into 'deep impassable mud.' Procopius describes one notoriously frightful stretch in ancient Bithynia on which innumerable travelers and animals perished (Procopius, *de Aedificiis* 5.3.12–3). Most of these routes have not withstood the passage of centuries. What remains are the stretches of premier roadway that characterized the Mediterranean core (Laurence 2001: 82, 1999: 58–77). These were the result of skilled engineering and considerable monetary outlay.

In a remarkable passage, Statius describes the process of constructing the Via Domitiana:

> The first labor was to dig ditches and to cut out the borders of the road and to excavate the ground within to a great depth; next to fill in the emptied ditches with other materials and to prepare the interior for the high ridge of the road, so that neither would the soil give way nor a treacherous foundation provide an unstable bed for the paving stones under the pressure of traffic; finally, to bind the road with blocks close-set on either side and with packed polygonal pavers. Oh how many gangs are at work at the same time! This group cuts down forests and clears the mountains, another group smoothes stakes and fashions beams with iron tools; another binds the rocks and weaves together the work with lime and dusty pozzolana; still another group dries up the thirsty pools and draws the smaller streams far away by their labor.
> *(*Sil. *4.3.40–55; Quilici 2008: 566–7)*

First a bed was dug and leveled. Straightness was valued as a means of facilitating the movement of troops, but it demanded an extraordinarily high level of accurate surveying (Lewis 2001: 217–45). Thus absolute straightness was often abandoned in favor of following the contours of the land. On hillsides, beds were laid slightly below the crest to take advantage of firmer footing and better drainage, as well as to afford troops a degree of protection while traveling through hostile territory (Chevallier 1976: 114–16; Coulston 2001). The concern for safety also dictated that densely wooded areas be avoided and underbrush cleared back from the roads. In rugged terrain, routes often followed older paths, skirting mountains and avoiding defiles. But if the need were great enough, the Roman engineers were prepared to bore through mountains or cantilever a roadway along the side of a cliff (Forbes 1955: 150; Chevallier 1976: 104–6; Quilici 2008).

Road width varied according to use, importance, and terrain, but a width of 4.1–4.2 m (14 Roman feet) was customary. Roads widened as they approached major towns and around curves, and narrowed when going through difficult terrain (Chevallier 1976: 66, 89). But even when boring through solid rock, military routes had to be sufficiently wide to accommodate heavy baggage wagons. In difficult alpine passes, pullouts were constructed to provide room for passing or stopped vehicles. The slope was kept to around 7 percent (Quilici 2008: 56–68).

Once the roadbed was prepared, it was filled with a foundation mixture of broken pottery, small stones, and often some waterproofing material. Heavy rollers then rammed this mixture down to prevent pockets that could collect water and lead to heaving and cracking. Finally, flat paving stones were fitted closely together, ideally to form an unbroken surface (Forbes 1955: 146–7; Casson 1988: 354). Pedestrian sidewalks, of 3 meters on either side, were common.

To facilitate drainage, the road surface was slightly crowned and ditches were dug on either side. These were usually 3 meters wide and at least as deep as the foundation course. The result of this labor was a road some 100–140 centimeters deep, or three to four times the depth of a modern roadbed (Forbes 1955: 148). Roads built over unstable ground might require even more elaborate construction techniques involving support posts and planks or bundles of sticks (Chevallier 1976: 89–90; Quilici 2008: 568).

Figure 22.4 Section of a paved Roman road showing curbing and sidewalks, Jerash, Jordan. Photo Andrew Leyerle

This impressive technology gave Roman roads exceptional durability. They could sustain the wear of iron wheels for 70 to 100 years before needing thorough reconstruction, although high-traffic stretches might need servicing every 30 to 40 years. Even relatively simple cobble roads, in which cobbles were embedded in a 10 centimeter sandbed, probably had a life of 10 to 15 years (Forbes 1955: 148–9). A road's longevity was, in part, determined by weather. In the northern parts of the empire, roads were subject to frost damage such as cracks and potholes. By the end of the empire, the task of road repair had outstripped the construction of new routes.

The construction of these routes served ideological as well as practical ends. They proclaimed the domination and control of Rome not only by their impressive durability and straightness, but also by their implicit disregard of pre-existing networks and boundaries (Muir 2000: 100; Howe 2005: 29). Scenes depicting the clearing of forests and the graveling of roads thus appear on Trajan's column, where they trumpet the Roman virtues of discipline and control over natural resources, in apparent contrast to barbarian disorganization and panic (Coulston 2001: 123, 126–9; cf. Salway 2001: 56).

Even more than roads, bridges symbolized the technological abilities and political will of Roman culture (Quilici 2008: 569–73). Caesar's successful spanning of the Rhine on two occasions was a triumph of engineering (*Bell.* 4.16–19; 6.9), and even four centuries after Hadrian had dismantled Apollodorus of Damascus' bridge over the Danube, it was still worthy of praise (Dio 68.13.1–6; Procop. *Aed.* 4.6.11–16; Coulston 2001: 124). With good reason, Pliny lists the construction of bridges among topics suitable for a panegyric (*Ep.* 8.4.2). Bridges were usually constructed out of a core of concrete faced with local stones, and typically feature large piers and rounded arches—some with remarkable spans. Impressive examples, such as the bridge at Cordoba, were built throughout the empire to carry roads across major rivers.

Figure 22.5 The Roman bridge at Cordoba. Photo J. C. N. Couston

The cost of this infrastructure was understandably high. Funding for road works was initially raised through direct taxation. Private officials might also contribute their own money to this public work. In return, they expected to receive public recognition and honor, often in the form of inscribed milestones (*CIL* 10.5416, 5.8668, 10.3851; Justinian, *Digesta* 31.10; Laurence 2004: 45–53). These were columnar markers set along the road and readily visible from a distance, as they stood two to four meters above the ground. While the earliest examples are simply inscribed with the distance from the nearest city, later ones often bear a list of the public works of the donor responsible for funding the road's construction (e.g., *CIL* 12.1524; Chevallier 1976: 39–44). Where successive patrons vied to commemorate their public-spirited generosity, milestones occur in clusters (Isaac and Roll 1982: 91–8). Within Italy, the maintenance of the road system gradually devolved upon specially appointed officials, but in the provinces it remained a duty of the governor—one closely related to the preservation of peace.

The speed of travel along these well-engineered and costly roads strikes us as almost unbelievably slow. Casson estimated that a person traveling by foot on level ground, would go on average 15 to 20 miles per day (Casson 1974: 188). On longer trips, the rate would fall to a more sustainable rate of 13 to 20 miles per day (Kolb 2000: 310–11; McCormick 2001: 474–81). On his forced march from Antioch to Rome, Ignatius would have spent 86 days walking and 9 days aboard ship (Ramsay 1904: 384–6). In a carriage, one could reasonably expect to cover 25–30 miles a day, at a rate of four miles an hour. Under duress, this rate might increase to as much as 40 or 45 miles per day, but not for long (Chevallier 1976: 188). While horses were the swiftest means of conveyance, they were seldom used because of their costliness. Not only were they expensive to buy, but they also required a high quality, costly, diet. Unable to sustain hard driving, they also proved less sure-footed over uneven terrain (Hyland 1990). For heavy loads of grain or metals, oxen were the best choice. Their pace was slow at 6 to 10 miles per day, but sustainable over long distances and on an inferior diet readily available to most Greek and Roman farmers (Varro, *Rust.* 1.20, 2.8; K. D. White, 1984: 52). Donkeys were popular, especially in mountainous regions, but the load they could carry was significantly less than that of a horse. By far the most popular animal for traveling was therefore the mule, a cross between

a horse and a donkey that combined the best features of both (Raepsaet 2008: 584–98). Camels were also used in sandy regions (*It. Eg.* 6.1–2; Casson 1988: 356; Bagnall 1993: 38–40).

A variety of carts, carriages, and litters were available. Of these, the most comfortable, but also the slowest, was the litter (*lectica*), in which one sat or reclined while being conveyed by animals or a group of sturdy men (Casson 1988: 356–7). It was thus in a gesture of asceticism that Paula exchanged her customary litter for a mule on her pilgrimage through Palestine (Jerome, *Ep.* 108.7). For swifter travel, two- and four-wheeled vehicles (*carpentum*, *raeda, carruca dormitoria*) were available (Ammianus Marcellinus 29.6; Laurence 1999: 136–42; Raepsaet 2008: 598–9). Those desiring protection from the elements or from the eyes of others might choose a closed carriage, as did Pliny when suffering from eye-strain (*Ep.* 7.21), or Gregory of Nyssa when forced to abandon monastic seclusion for a trip to the Holy Land (*Ep.* 2).

A number of technological problems slowed the progress of vehicles (Raepsaet 2008). Traction was generally poor without 'dished' wheels that could grip the crowned road surface. Indeed, where routes ran along sheer drops, deep groves were scored into the pavement to guide the wheels (Forbes 1955: 138; Chevallier 1976: 89; Quilici 2008: 562). A fixed front axle demanded a slow, wide arc on every turn. Without ball or roller bearings, or even cost-effective lubrication, wheel hubs were vulnerable to friction from the axle (Harris 1974; Casson 1988: 356). Any steep gradient posed a real danger to a heavily laden wagon, since neither efficient bits nor brakes had been invented. There was, moreover, always the danger of an animal slipping on slick sections of the stone-paved road (Polge 1967: 28–54). The earliest horse 'shoes' were, in fact, designed to hold hobnail studs to improve traction, rather than to protect sensitive hooves (Apuleius, *Met.* 4.4, 9.32; Green, 1966: 305–8). Finally, none of the wheeled conveyances had any suspension system. Given the bone-jarring prospect of long-distance driving, most people preferred to walk.

The laborious difficulty of travel over land is graphically summed up in the prices for the conveyance of goods. From Diocletian's *Price Edict* of 301, A. H. M. Jones calculated that a wagon-load of wheat doubled its price every 300 miles (Jones 1964: 2.841). At such a rate, it was far cheaper to bring wheat to Rome from Egypt by ship than to carry it even 75 miles by road. These older estimates can now be supplemented and refined by consulting the Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Ancient World (ORBIS), which allows users to track with astonishing precision the fluctuations in travel time and cost associated with various routes at different seasons of the year (Scheidel 2014, 2015). Personal travel was also expensive. Apuleius writes that the outlay necessary for Lucius' trip from Corinth to Rome 'melted away his humble inheritance' (*Met.* 11.28).

To the intrinsic discomforts of travel, we must add the danger of bandits (Riess 2011). Suetonius and Strabo both praise Augustus for suppressing brigandry by extending the road system and installing military posts (*Augustus* 32; *Geography* 4.6.6), but Luke's story of the Good Samaritan takes for granted the likelihood of robbers setting upon travelers on deserted stretches of road (10:30; see also 2 Cor. 11:26; Pliny, *Natural History* 6.25; Apuleius, *Met.* 1.7). In 296 CE, a soldier wrote to his wife: 'Bring your gold jewelry with you, but don't wear it!' (*P. Mich.* 214). Poorer travelers were always more vulnerable to assault than the rich, who typically traveled with a retinue and might even have the resources to hire a military escort (Lucian, *Alexander* 55). Certain routes were, we gather, best avoided. Basil was surprised that no one had warned the priest Dorotheus that the road to Rome from Constantinople was impassable in winter, 'being full of enemies' (*Ep.* 215). Despite these perils, everyone knew that things had been worse. Abraham's ready obedience to God's command to go to a place he did not know is all the more impressive, according to Chrysostom, since 'at that time, traveling was so unpleasant; it was not possible then, as it is now, to mingle with others safely and to travel abroad without apprehension' (*In Genesim homiliae* 31.5).

Even if one managed to avoid the clutches of bandits, there was no escape from the irritation of gnats or the chugging of bullfrogs that might make sleep quite impossible (Horace, *Sermones* 1.5.14–7). Other perils included roving packs of wolves or fierce dogs (Apuleius, *Met.* 8.15–7, 9.36), and bridges in states of ruinous disrepair (Procopius, *Aed.* 5.5). Winter brought its own difficulties. Not only were

avalanches a risk in mountainous regions (Strabo, *Geography* 4.6.6), but all travel slowed to a crawl. When Aelius Aristides set out eagerly in midwinter from Asia Minor, he was impeded first by rain and then by snow before being wholly arrested by sickness; 100 days later and a shadow of his former self, he finally reached Rome. Under favorable circumstances, the trip should have taken no more than a month (*Sacred Tales*, 2.60–2).

All these hazards encouraged the religiously minded to take precautions. Many consulted the gods on when to travel (Apuleius, *Met*. 2.12–3, 9.8). In response to a question concerning travel to Italy, one oracle in Asia Minor replied with unusual clarity: 'Make not your journey by sea, but travel afoot by the highway' (Lucian, *Alex*. 53, trans. A. M. Harmon, Loeb Classical Library). Dreams would be carefully scrutinized: keys meant travel delays, and quails ambushes by bandits (Artemidorus 3.54, 3.5). Few were so foolhardy as to set out on a journey with the left foot first (Apuleius, *Met*. 1.5, Chrysostom, *In Eph. hom*. 12.3).

Orientation devices

To the question of how travelers planned their routes and made their way across the empire, scholars have long assumed that the Romans had scale maps (Sherk 1974: 559; Dilke 1987: 254; Harvey 1987: 466), and we do have some comparable 'illustrated' maps (*itineraria picta*). Of these, the best known, as well as the most beautiful, is the Peutinger Table, a twelfth-century copy of a Roman civilian map. In brilliant colors, it traces the main routes of the empire, depicts major topographical features, and indicates resting stops, towns and cities and the distances between them (Talbert 2010). But it was never designed to serve as a practical aid. Not only would it have been extremely cumbersome to consult, but it evinces no concern for scale or even geographical accuracy (Brodersen 2001). The most common means of orientation in antiquity were simple lists of stations along a route (*itineraria adnotata*) (Brodersen 2001; Salway 2001: 48–54). Our earliest pilgrim account—that of the anonymous traveler from Bordeaux—is in fact just such an itinerary. At major nodes, travelers could also consult *tabellaria*, or wall plaques, that listed distances along several routes radiating from a central point (Salway 2001). Another practical aid were the piles of small stones that marked the edges of the roadway in desert regions (*Itin. Eg*. 6; Adams 2001: 141). Comments made in passing, however, suggest that most travelers relied on experienced guides. Chrysostom assumes that people 'moving from one city to another need someone to lead them by the hand' (*De Laz*. 2.2): ideally, this would be a person who had 'traveled over much country' and thus could 'report with great precision the number of stadia and the arrangement of cities: their layout, harbors, and markets' (*In Matthaeum homiliae* 1.7).

Inns

In a system of communication built upon the movement of bodies, hospitality was of crucial importance. Whenever possible, travelers preferred to stay with acquaintances. But when this option was not available, they often carried letters of recommendation that enabled them to knock on the door of friends of friends or other members of their guild or profession (Rom. 16:10–12; 1 Cor. 16:11; 2 Cor. 7:15; Apuleius, *Met*. 1.21–3, 10.1). These letters tended to be highly formulaic: 'Receive this highly honored and much sought-after man, and do not hesitate to treat him hospitably, thus doing what behooves you and what pleases me' (Malherbe 1988: 74–5). In his own letters, Paul often requests lodging for himself as well as for his companions (Rom. 15:23–4; Philem. 1:22; 1 Cor. 16:6–7). He was evidently not the only itinerant Christian to stay with Gaius at Corinth, as the apostle styles him, 'host to me and to the whole church' (Rom. 16:23). By the second century, 'being hospitable' was one of the qualifications for episcopal office (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8), and would remain an expectation throughout the early Christian period. In addition to welcoming strangers, bishops were also required to write letters of recommendation. Many of these survive. In the late third century, for example, Bishop Sotas of Oxyrhyncus wrote and received letters of recommendation

on behalf of women and catechumens, as well as of men and fully initiated Christians (Llewelyn 1998: 169–72; Luijendijk 2008: 81–124).

In addition to being a kindly gesture, sheltering others was an important means of extending one's social network. The record of people who stayed with Jerome in his monastery on the Mount of Olives constitutes a virtual *Who's Who* of the late fourth-century Christian world (Clark 1992: 28–33).

For those who lacked contacts in any given region, there were commercial venues. Inns were available not only in towns, but also along the main routes. They were usually located a day's journey, or 25 miles, apart unless difficult terrain demanded closer placement (Casson 1988: 354). Hostelries were needed not only for the refreshment of travelers, but also for the regular exchange of horses and vehicles. Stops made simply for fresh horses were originally called *mutationes* (changes), whereas overnight stays were termed *mansiones* (rest-stops). By the time of the Theodosian *Code*, however, these terms were used interchangeably (Chevallier 1976: 185). From one rest-stop to another, two changes seem to have been typical. The Bordeaux pilgrim, for example, records that he

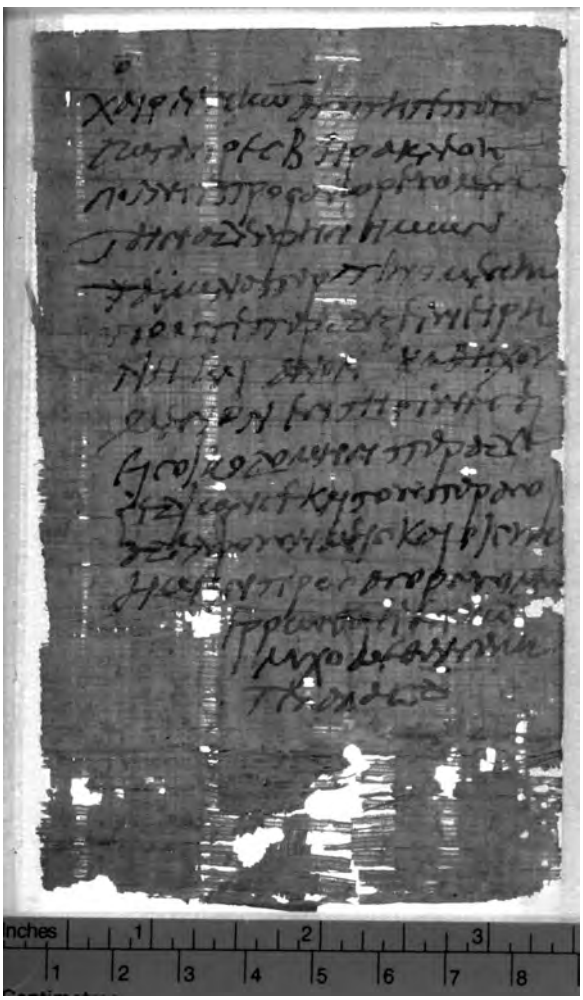

Figure 22.6 P.Oxy 36.2785, a letter of recommendation from the presbyters of Heracleopolis to bishop Sotas. Photo with permission of the Egypt Exploration Society

covered the 2,221 miles from Bordeaux to Constantinople, with 230 changes and 112 rest-stops: an average rate of travel of about 19.8 miles per day. Occasional difficult stretches demanded three or even four changes of equipment a day.

Facilities at inns varied considerably, but complaints are common (Constable 2003: 11–35). Traveling in northern Greece, Lucius wrote that his bed, 'besides being a bit too short and missing a leg, was rotten' (Apuleius, *Met.* 1.11; cf. Aelius Aristides, *Sacred Tales* 2.61). Jerome assumes that his readers will appreciate Paula's ascetic commitment that led her, while traveling in the Holy Land, to refuse invitations to lodge at official mansions and put up instead at what he tautologically terms 'miserable inns' (*Ep.* 108.7, 9, 14). But where travelers had a choice in accommodation, the quality tended to improve (Plutarch, *Moralia* 532B–C). In Asia Minor, Epictetus suggests that a traveler might be tempted to linger on in a luxurious inn (*Dissertationes* 2.23.36); and in that same region, Aelius Aristides preferred to stay at an inn rather than at the house of a friend (*Or.* 27). The Peutinger Table's use of a variety of symbols for inns (a four-sided building surrounding a court, a house with a twin-peaked roof, or a single-peaked cottage) seems to reflect this potential range, rather than the actual quality of lodging at any given point (Talbert 2010: 117–22). But whatever their level of amenities, inns had a poor reputation as places of prostitution and potential violence. A porter in Apuleius's novel assumes that any guest hurrying to leave before daybreak might have murdered his traveling companion (*Met.* 1.15; see also *Acts Thom.* 11.2), and a fourth-century tombstone near Antioch, recording the death of two cousins 'murdered in the inn of Theodorus near Laodicea,' attests to the fact that such a scenario was not purely fictional (Tchalenko 1953–58: 31–2, 111). Churchmen especially decried the danger posed to sexual virtue by inns. It was largely on this basis that Gregory of Nyssa tried to dissuade Christians from going on pilgrimage (*Or.* 2; cf. Ulpian, *Digesta* 3.2.4.2; 23.2.43.1 and 9; *Codex Theodosianus* 4.56.3); but the association of inns with prostitution is still taken utterly for granted in the sixth-century *Life* of Theodore of Sykeon (*Encomium in S. Theodorum Siceotam* 1, 3). In order to combat this hazard, as well as to provide charitable support for pilgrims, monks, and other Christian travelers, churches and monasteries began to establish hospices (*xenodocheions*) in the fourth century (Basil, *Ep.* 94; Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 43.63; Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 7; Constable 2003: 35–8). Over time, these facilities became increasingly devoted to caring for the sick and dying (Miller 1990). In the late sixth century, when the anonymous pilgrim from Piacenza traveled to Jerusalem, he marveled at the hospice facilities associated with the Nea church: 'in order to look after travellers they have innumerable tables and more than three thousand beds for the sick' (*Itin. Plac.* 23). Even if we reduce this number to 200, on the basis of archeological findings, this was still a facility of extraordinary size.

Tolls

Occurring with even more regularity than inns were tollbooths and customs offices. Along the roads and at every bridge travelers would have to pay a fee for their use of the facilities, with the proceeds going into a fund for maintenance (Forbes 1955: 152). At the borders of provinces, as well as city gates, taxes were due on all transported goods (Rougé 1966: 450–1; Chevallier 1976: 195–7; Bang 2008: 202–38). The amount varied according to province. Some taxed goods at variable rates; others charged a flat percentage (from 2½ to 5 percent). In a small village in Egypt, a man transporting six measures of lentils on two donkeys in 190 CE, owed 3 percent in customs tax (Oxford, *P. Grenf.* II 50 h; Hopkins 1991). Another inscription, however, suggests that this tax varied according to rank (*OGIS* 674; Ramsay 1904: 394–6). By the time additional fees and administrative charges were tacked on, the payment of custom duties often equaled or surpassed the cost of transport. Tariffs on luxury goods were even more punitive. According to Pliny, caravans importing frankincense from southern Arabia to Gaza had to pay 688 *denarii* per camel in various local taxes, even before surrendering the official customs tariff to the Roman publicans (Pliny *Nat.* 12.32; see also Strabo 17). Penalties for making a false declaration were proportionately severe: often up to twice the usual rate

(*Dig*. Marcian, 39.4.16.10). Philostratus humorously exploits this reality in his *Life* of Apollonius of Tyana. When this first-century itinerant sage and wonder worker came to a bridge crossing into Mesopotamia, a customs official asked him what he had to declare. Loftily, he replied:

> 'I export moderation, righteousness, virtue, continence, courage, discipline'—thereby stringing together a number of female names. [The tax-collector] scenting profit, said, 'Register these slaves.' But [Apollonius] replied, 'Impossible! For these are not slaves that I am taking out of the country but masters.'
>
> *(*Vita Apollonii *1.20)*

While making jokes at the expense of a customs official is seldom in the best interests of a traveler, we are not told whether Apollonius' wit caused him unnecessary expense or delay.

Sea travel

Compared to the grinding tedium of travel overland, travel by water, if the winds were favorable, seemed almost miraculously swift. Thus, while the Greeks had many words for the sea, their favorite term was *pontos*, a word that never entirely severed its connotation of a bridge.

Travel by sea, as by land, remained largely determined by the necessities of business. As there were no dedicated passenger boats, those wishing to travel by sea booked passage aboard merchant vessels destined, ideally, for the same port. Passengers desiring to go from Rome to Alexandria were the most fortunate. The capital city's constant need for wheat ensured a steady stream of huge cargo ships. These freighters offered no special amenities for travelers, but did typically make better time. Travel to less frequented destinations, however, as with air travel today, required several layovers and the use of progressively smaller vessels. A passenger heading to Palestine from Rome was thus well advised to board a grain ship for Alexandria and proceed from there to Palestine (Philo, *In Flaccum* 5.26).

Unlike the mobile warships which were constructed like oversized racing shells, merchant ships were built to maximize cargo space. They were broad in the beam and difficult to maneuver (Casson 1995: 252–7; McGrail 2003). A spread of canvas made out of flax (Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* 19.1.3–4) provided their only means of locomotion. In periods of calm, they would simply drop anchor and wait for the wind to pick up, as Plautus well knew when he described a couple of dawdlers as 'slower than *corbitas* on a calm sea' (*Poenulus* 507), a *corbita* being a slow-sailing merchant ship. To modern eyes, their spread of sail was insufficient for their size (Casson 1988: 359). A three-sail rig (a main sail, topsail, and forward bowsprit sail or *artemon*) was standard throughout the ancient world for all but the largest ships, which added a square mizzen on the afterdeck. Without fore-and-aft rigging, moreover, these boats were unable to take efficient advantage of winds blowing from any direction other than behind. During the summer months when the sea was open for travel, strong winds, the so-called 'yearly' or 'etesian' winds, blew steadily from the north west. The run from Rome to Alexandria was thus relatively speedy, with two weeks being average; but the return voyage was a laborious affair. Instead of striking out across the Mediterranean, these boats would skirt the coast of Roman Palestine until they could cross on the leeward side of the Island of Rhodes; from there, they sailed to Fair Havens Harbor on Crete, before striking across to Malta and on to Sicily; only then could they make their way up the western side of Italy into the harbor at Puteoli or Ostia (Ramsay 1904: 379–81). This circuitous route usually took about two months, but might take longer. When Gregory Nazianzen sailed from Alexandria to Greece, he reached Rhodes only on the twentieth day (*Or.* 18.31). Even with a favorable wind, ancient ships probably averaged no more than four to six knots, and against the wind, half of that or less.

When the wind blew from the side, but from a point somewhat ahead, the square-rigged ships of antiquity could still make some headway by tacking, or tracing a zigzag course through the water, which allowed the ship to take the wind on one bow and then the other (Casson 1988: 357).

To be effective, the transition from one direction to another needed to be as abrupt as possible, a procedure that could alarm passengers unfamiliar with the technique. Synesius, a fourth-century bishop of Cyrene, was thus certain that the ship's captain had lost his mind when he began to tack against the prevailing northwesterly winds (*Ep.* 4).

Unlike modern sailing craft, which are more at risk when sailing close to land, ancient ships were most vulnerable on the open sea. Sudden strong gusts of wind brought pressure to bear on the huge central sail, causing the central mast to work like a giant lever and splinter the ship's hull (Ramsay 1904: 399). To counteract this danger, ingenious reefing techniques were developed. Lines running from the deck up through rings, or 'brails,' attached at regular intervals to the sails, allowed the canvas to be shortened rapidly like some large venetian blind, provided, of course, that the ropes ran smoothly and did not jam in the pulley-blocks (Synesius, *Ep.* 4).

The famous description of the storm at sea in Acts 27 vividly traces the steps taken to avoid shipwreck. In the grip of a rising wind, the captain tries to face into the storm. When he loses control, he orders the sails reefed and allows the boat to be driven by the wind. As the storm worsens, the crew begins to throw surplus cargo overboard, on the third day, jettisoning even the ship's tackle. Without sight of sun or stars and caught in a tempest, the travelers succumb to despair. On the fourteenth day, as the ship drifts in the Adriatic, the sailors take soundings and discover that the boat is heading into shore. Immediately, they let out four anchors from the stern. Other sailors, fearing that the ship is about to run onto rocks, surreptitiously lower the life boat while pretending to cast anchors from the bow. Toward day, the crew lightens the ship further by casting its cargo of wheat into the sea. As day dawns, the shore appears. The crew then cut the anchors loose and hoist the foresail to head toward the beach. Striking a shoal, the ship runs aground. With the bow firmly stuck, the stern is broken up by the surf. But all the passengers and crew escape safely either by swimming to shore or

Figure 22.7 A relief on the mausoleum of C. Munatius Faustus (50 CE) of a typical Roman merchant ship with crew members reefing the sails to enter port. Photo Erich Lessing, Art Resource New York City

riding in on planks or other flotsam. The passengers in Achilles Tatius' romance were not so lucky. As passengers and crew fight bitterly over places in the one small lifeboat, many drown impaled on spars or dashed upon the rocks (3.3.1–5.5).

The use of anchors in the Acts narrative is particularly instructive. Underwater archeology has discovered a contemporary Roman ship that went down off the coast of Taranto; it had thrown out 5 anchors, each weighing over 600 kilograms. These were made mostly of wood weighted down with iron fittings. Surviving specimens of ancient anchors reveal, not surprisingly, a poignant blend of practicality and fervent prayer. The stocks, or cross bars, are often inscribed with the names of gods or occasionally with knucklebones, a placating gesture to 'Lady Luck' (Casson 1995: 250–7). The associations of trustworthy stability made the anchor a popular symbol for signet rings, which were used to secure valuables at home (Clement, *Paedagogus* 3.11).

Aside from storms and the inevitable bouts of seasickness (Oldelehr 1977), travelers by sea braved the threat of pirates (Achilles Tatius 5.7; Horden and Purcell 2000: 157–9) and the scarcely less fearful rapacity of legendary sea-creatures (Herodotus, *Historia* 6.44.3). Such dangers encouraged even more superstition than did travel by land (Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.16.18; Artemidorus, 2.23, 2.12, 2.17, 3.65, 3.38; Polyaenus 3.10.2; Plutarch, *Themistocles* 13.3; Cicero, *De Divinatione* 2.4.84; Petronius, *Satyricon* 103–5).

To book passage on a ship, an ancient traveler headed down to the port. In most harbors, would-be passengers simply walked the quays asking where ships were bound, as Libanius did in 340 CE when looking for passage from Constantinople to Athens (*Or.* 1.31). In Rome's great port city of Ostia, however, a square directly inland from the harbor held the offices of all the merchants plying trade overseas. A prospective traveler might simply make a round of the square to book passage on any ship (Casson 1988: 361). Boats were distinguished not by name but by an image painted or modeled in relief just under the bow on either side. They also varied in color (Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* 35.31, 49; Philostratus, *Imagines* 1.19.3; Casson 1995: 211–12).

Ships did not sail on a schedule; they waited for a favorable wind. Passengers were thus also compelled to hang about the waterfront until a herald announced their ship's departure (Augustine, *Conf.* 5.8; Philostratus, *V. Apoll.* 8.14). Gangways and ladders were used for boarding. Once aboard, passengers had limited space. The largest of the grain ships might take on 600 passengers (Josephus, *Vita* 15). On Paul's ship to Rome, there were 276 people in all (Acts 27:37), of which perhaps 260 were passengers. But this ship was sailing in the off-season, and might not have been at capacity. Synesius tells us that he traveled with about 50 other passengers, a third of whom were women. From him also we hear that most of the ship's crew were Jewish (*Ep.* 4). Aside from the captain, there were other specialized officers: usually a first mate and purser, as well as those in charge of the cargo. These officers, as well as the rest of the crew, might well be slaves (Casson 1995: 314–21).

As the hold was mostly reserved for cargo, ballast (often sand but sometimes edible produce like lentils), and dunnage (packing material designed to protect fragile cargo such as building slates or jars of wine or olive oil), there was limited room for passengers below deck. A few might travel down by the bilge water, in the ancient equivalent of steerage. Lucian's characters describe these quarters as so cramped and uncomfortable that they were fit only for criminals (*Juppiter Tragoedus* 48; cf. Athenaeus 5.207f). Most passengers camped out on the open deck, either setting up temporary shelters or simply rolling out bedding (Achilles Tatius, 2.33.1; Petronius, *Sat.* 100.6; Lucian, *Toxaris* 20; Pachomius, *Regula* 119). Well-to-do travelers brought on board an impressive panoply of creature comforts, with a corps of servants to deploy them. An elite few might enjoy the greater comforts afforded by the one permanent cabin on deck, where the owner or his agent, the captain, and a few select guests might travel as it were in first class (Achilles Tatius, 5.15.3). But for the majority, few amenities were available. Fresh drinking water was provided from a special tank lined with waterproof fabric, located either in the hold or on deck (Casson 1995: 177). While storage on deck was more convenient, it was also more risky. Gregory Nazianzen's describes the helpless dismay felt by passengers witnessing their loss of potable water: 'While the ship was heaving, the receptacle which held our treasured supply of

sweet water was smashed and its contents dispersed in the sea' (*Poemata de seipso* 11.145–7). In boats equipped with a galley, passengers might avail themselves of its facilities once the crew had been fed (Van Doorninck 1972: 137–44). The only other available facility may have been a latrine, as some relief sculptures show a small covered structure perched over the water on the stern, directly behind the steering apparatus (Casson 1995: 180), but this is only a guess.

Roman engineers, having discovered a kind of concrete capable of setting under water, were able to construct breakwaters and thus ensure calm harbors (Vitruvius, *De arch*. 2.6.1, 5.12; Oleson *et al*. 2004; Brandon *et al*. 2014). In Alexandria, the first lighthouse was erected to such acclaim that it became one of the seven 'Wonders of the Ancient World.' Like all subsequent lighthouses in antiquity, it served to guide boats into the harbor rather than to warn them of dangerous rocks or reefs (Morton 2001: 210–14). Once inside the breakwater, large ships were guided to shore where they were made fast to massive stones set into the quays (Blackman 2008: 643–54). Cargo and passengers traveling further inland might then progress to smaller vessels designed to travel along rivers, as did the Lady Poemenia (Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 35; Hunt 1982: 76–7). Traveling upstream on rivers such as the Danube, Rhōne, and Seine, often demanded towing, usually by humans but sometimes by animals (Campbell 2012: 212–14). For this reason, tow-paths were a common feature running along both sides of the river banks. For smaller boats plying along the coast, two versions of the fore-and-aft rig were known: the spritsail and lateen. Running parallel to the keel, these sails could make efficient use of winds blowing from ahead.

Travel by sea, although potentially so swift, was subject to seasonal limitation. From November 10 until March 10, the Mediterranean was officially 'closed' (Vegetius 4.39; *Codex Theodosianus* 13.9.3). During this time, sailors were reluctant to put to sea not only because of the risk of winter storms but also because of the increased cloud cover that made navigation on the open water all but impossible (Casson 1988: 357; McGrail 2008: 628–30). Thus Paul urged the sailors to put up for the winter in Crete, because 'the fast' (i.e., Yom Kippur) had already passed, bringing an end to the safe sailing period (Acts 27:9). But even during the winter abatement, vessels such as the Roman grain ships and military craft still sailed as required (Casson 1995: 270–1; Roth 1999; McCormick 2001: 444–68). Smaller commercial boats no doubt also continued to ply the waters; but these, instead of risking the open water, sailed from port to port, hugging the coastline (Horden and Purcell 2000: 142–3; Beresford 2013).

Letter-writing

Wherever people traveled, they brought news. Coming into town, merchants were typically surrounded by townspeople eager for news (Caesar, *Bellum Gallicum* 4.5; Livy 42.4). In return for hospitality, guests were expected to regale their hosts with information, including news about their 'native country, its leading men and governor' (Apuleius, *Met*. 1.26). If one could not travel oneself, sending a letter was the next best thing. The sentiments that Seneca expressed when he wrote to his friend Lucilius were no doubt widely shared: 'I never receive a letter from you without being in your company forthwith . . . For that which is sweetest when we meet face to face is afforded by the impress of a friend's hand upon his letter – recognition' (*Epistulae Morales* 40.1, trans. LCL). Jerome was later to confess that he was unable to estimate the number of letters he had sent to his friend Paula, since he wrote to her every day (*De viris illustribus* 135). From its very beginning, Christianity was a movement of letter writers (Stowers 1986: 15; Klauck 2006: 299–434). More than 9,000 letters written by Christians in antiquity have come down to us. They wrote on many different kinds of materials (papyri, parchment, leather, wax-covered wooden tablets, and ostraka) and for all sorts of reasons (Jördens 2011).

Official business required letters. To bring charges, appeal decisions, and intercede on behalf of others, Christians wrote petitions to governmental officials of all ranks, up to and including the emperor. During the so-called Great Persecution, church leaders submitted letters detailing

the property owned by their churches; and lay Christians sometimes reported how they had handled the imperial decree mandating sacrifice. One man wrote to his wife, telling her that he had compelled a pagan friend to make the offering on his behalf (Luijendijk 2008: 189–226). After the peace of Constantine, when the emperor wished to summon bishops to a council, he did so by letter (Jerome, *Ep*. 108.6). And when clerics wanted to rally empire-wide support for disputes, they wrote letters. Thus, when the fourth-century priest Arius found himself in bitter disagreement with his bishop, he sent letters describing this local quarrel throughout the eastern empire. The bishop, meanwhile, having already called a council that excommunicated Arius, wrote to all his fellow bishops condemning the priest's position. And with this exchange of letters, the Arian controversy began (Stowers 1986: 46–7).

The majority of letters, however, are concerned with familial or business matters. They relay family news, discuss pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing; make arrangements for textile production, agricultural work, and rent collection; request assistance, food, and money; or itemize gifts that accompany the letter (Bagnall and Cribiore 2006). Health concerns arise frequently. Despite their terseness, many of these letters are remarkably poignant, as in this example sent by a fourth-century lay woman, Valeria, to an Egyptian monk named Papnouthis. After the formulaic greeting, she makes her request:

> I ask and beg you, most honored father, to ask for me a kindness from Christ and that I may obtain healing. I believe that in this way I may obtain healing through your prayers, for revelations of ascetics and worshipers are manifested. For I am afflicted by a great disease of terrible shortness of breath. I have believed and believe that if you pray on my behalf I will receive healing. I beg of God, I beg also of you, remember me in your holy prayer.
> *(*P.Lond. *6.1926 [*c. AD *340–350], trans. Bagnall and Cribiore 2006: 205)*

The fluency of expression as well as the handwriting suggests a moderately proficient writer, but one did not need to be literate to send a letter. Although the reading-and-writing population of late antiquity was never more than 20 percent, and may often have been considerably less, almost everyone was able to access writing and reading skills to meet their needs (Harris 1989; Hopkins 1991; McDonnell 1996; Bagnall and Cribiore 2006: 42–8). A technical skill among others, it may have been no more difficult to find someone able to write a letter than to sew a piece of clothing.

People to carry letters were essential to the system. Anyone traveling in the right direction might be pressed into service, or provide a reason for the writing of a letter (White 1986: 213–17; Klauck 2006: 43–65). We gather from the frequent accusations of failure to write that it was not difficult to find a courier. When an expected message was delayed, people assumed that it had not been written rather than that a courier had been unavailable (Llewelyn 1994: 26–9). The presence of large numbers of ex-patriots in any given area is understood as ensuring a regular stream of people traveling between the two locations. 'Write word to us,' a third-century letter enjoins, 'if one of our people sails down' (*BGU* XIV 2417; Llewelyn 1994: 26, 29). The ideal courier, however, was someone known to the writer, who could be relied upon to deliver the message to the right address (Bagnall and Cribiore 2006: 37–40), and to amplify the message if required. Thus Paul sent his letters via trusted associates, such as Timothy and Titus (1 Cor. 4:17; 2 Cor. 8:16–24; 9:3–5; see also Phil. 2:25–30; Eph. 6:21–2; Thompson 1998: 65–8) and Ignatius entrusted two of his missives to his companion and secretary, Burrus (*ad Phil*. 11.2; *ad Smyrn*. 12.1; Llewelyn 1994: 51–7).

Not all couriers were reliable. Some letters were never delivered. Among these were the always problematic ones that accompanied money (Llewelyn 1994: 28–9). But couriers might simply be unable to locate the addressee, since most letters bore only the name of the intended recipient (Llewelyn 1994: 29–43). Delivery instructions were no doubt given orally, as when Ananias was told: 'Go to the street called Straight and inquire in the house of Judas for a man of Tarsus named Paul' (Acts 9:11). Other missives were intentionally delivered to the wrong person.

When Jerome entrusted Pammachius with a letter of reconciliation for Rufinus, Pammachius delivered instead a vitriolic missive intended for the privileged eyes of Jerome's close friends (*Ep*. 84 instead of *Ep*. 81; Clark 1992: 27–8). In this system, privacy was not guaranteed at any level (Jerome *Ep*. 57.2; Clark 1992: 32).

Recorded times for the delivery of letters vary widely. The time of year was a crucial factor, as letters might take twice as long in delivery during the worst season for traveling than during the best (Basil, *Ep*. 48). Yet even under the most favorable conditions, delays were not atypical. The demands of other business might produce a circuitous route, as when a letter from Puteoli south of Rome, went to Tyre in North Africa via Alexandria. In order to ensure that the government had access to a reliable, steady flow of information, the emperor Augustus developed the *cursus publicus*, or Imperial Post. At first, news was brought by a series of runners, but this system was quickly replaced by a relay of vehicles. The latter system, in which a single courier traveled the whole distance on a series of light wagons, ferries, and sailing ships sacrificed speed for the sake of the more detailed information that could be obtained by questioning the messenger (Suetonius, *Augustus* 49.3). The *cursus* was originally an infrastructure for use solely by designated state officials (*SEG* 26 1392, 13ff; Llewelyn 1995), but because vehicles could accommodate additional people and baggage, it quickly devolved into a transportation system and remained thus throughout late antiquity (Augustine, *Conf*. 5.13.23; Kolb 2001: 95–6).

The average speed of the post was perhaps five Roman miles an hour. In a day, a messenger traveled about 45 Roman miles (Procopius, *Historia Arcana* 30.3; Kolb 2000: 321–2). In a pinch, dispatch bearers occasionally covered twice the distance, with 160 miles a day being the maximum ever reported. Speed always depended upon the quality of the road, the density of the traffic, and the season. In places of strategic importance, a company of troops might be stationed to serve the postal service as dispatch bearers and road police (*It. Eg*. 7.2, 9.3; *Cod. Theod*. 8.5.38). A special section of the post was established in the late fourth century for express service, the so-called *cursus velox*.

Only designated officials had the right to use this relay system. To prove entitlement, they were required to carry a letter, or *diploma*, sealed by the governor of the province, authenticating their rightful business and stipulating the type of transport to which they were entitled (Chevallier 1976: 182). These certificates were inscribed on bronze, papyrus, or parchment tablets that were then attached either to the messenger's vehicle or the horse's neck. Official messengers would also be granted a letter of credit (*evectio*) stating the supplies he might requisition from each station. Initially, the government reimbursed these services, but by late antiquity, the economic burden fell entirely upon the local inhabitants (Kolb 2001: 97–8). By the early fourth century, an edict of Constantine makes it clear that travelers had to furnish their own drivers (*CTh* 8.5.2; Kolb 2001: 101). Despite the fact that penalties attached to those found abusing the system, legal and epigraphic evidence suggests that fraud was common (Forbes 1955: 153; Chevallier 1976: 182–4, 188). Chrysostom knew that the elite were likely to make use of the *cursus* a condition for their travel. They would greet a summons to the imperial city with a set of demands:

> Unless you give us carriages and soft bedding, we cannot come; nor can we come unless we have many attendants and are allowed to rest continually. And then we will come only if we have the use of beasts of burden and travel for just a small portion of the day—and there are many other things we need as well.
>
> *(*In Hebraeos homiliae *2.5)*

Conclusion

Despite rates that strike us as impossibly slow and routes that seem to us fraught with danger and delays, travel and communication were swifter and more readily effected in the early Christian period than at any previous time. A desire to communicate prompted people to travel vast distances

in the early Christian world, and the realities of travel inform all communication. We see this, certainly, in accounts of actual trips but also in the widespread use of metaphors drawn from travel. Even Augustine's comparison of Neoplatonism and Christianity is shaped by common concerns over impassable routes and potential incursions by bandits:

> It is one thing to see from a wooded mountain peak the land of peace, but to find no route to it, and to struggle in vain towards it by impassable ways, ambushed and beset by fugitives and deserters, under their leader, the lion and the dragon. It is a different thing to keep to the road that leads to that land, guarded by the protection of the heavenly commander, where no deserters from the heavenly army lie in wait like bandits.
>
> *(*Conf. *7.21; cf. Tertullian,* De resurrectione carnis *43)*

In a similar vein, Chrysostom's praise of monastic life echoes antiquity's admiration for lighthouses:

> There is a calm port. [Monks] are like beacons sending forth their light from a high point to those sailing in from afar. Stationed in the harbor, drawing all people to their own tranquility, they preserve from shipwreck those who look to them.
>
> *(*1 Tim. homiliae *14.3; cf.* de virginitate *24.2)*

Travel and communication were thus inextricably entwined. All our sources suggest that early Christians believed they lived in a time of exceptional mobility. But we know what they could not, namely that this ease of travel would not be surpassed until the age of the steam engine.

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PART V

Christian culture

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23
CHRISTIAN REALIA
Papyrological and epigraphical material

Giovanni Bazzana

The study of Christian *realia* has assumed a growing importance in the understanding of early Christianity in recent decades. It is a broad field, covering early Christian architecture and art, and papyrological and epigraphical remains. Since architecture and art are the subjects of Chapters 34 and 35 of this volume, this chapter focuses on the papyri and epigraphy.

Papyri

Literary papyri

The study of textual remains has for a long time held pride of place among those scholars of early Christianity interested in the material evidence pertaining to the formative stages of the Jesus movement. Obviously, because of the textual bias that has characterized this sub-discipline no less (or in all likelihood even more) than other sub-fields of the humanities, early Christian textual remains have been mined often (if not always) in order to extract from them texts on which one could then build critical editions, in particular of the all-important writings that were later included in the New Testament collection (Lührmann 2004).

Only in more recent years has it become evident to most observers and scholars engaged in the field that early Christian textual remains should be prized and studied because they constitute—to use a well-chosen phrase of Larry Hurtado (Hurtado 2006)—'the earliest Christian artifacts' at our disposal. Such a radical move is still in its infancy as far as our materials are concerned, but it can benefit greatly from a methodological standpoint of the significant contributions provided by those scholars who, over the last decades, have approached the study of later manuscripts and printed books in the wake of the so-called 'new philology' (see, for instance, Chartier 1992 or Grafton 1997). In this perspective, papyrologists working with any types of ancient texts have begun to look at the formal characteristics of single pieces as a means to produce more solidly grounded hypotheses on the writing and reading practices that ancient writers and readers associated with different configurations (see, for instance, Johnson 2010: 179–98).

Possibly the most interesting test case of these methodological developments is the renewed discussion concerning the Christian preference for the codex format against the traditional bookroll. In fact, the phenomenon of the move from a book production dominated by the bookroll

to one in which all books eventually had the format of codices has always attracted the attention of scholars of early Christianity because it took place progressively over the centuries in which the Christ movement came to dominate the Mediterranean world. Since Christians seemed to prefer the codex over the bookroll from a very early date, some scholars have even ventured to hypothesize that the affirmation of the codex might have been due in part to its Christian use or that Christians might have actually invented it. In keeping with the preeminence that is still given to textual contents over their material manuscript forms, scholars of early Christianity have sometimes suggested that the codex might have come to be seen as a perfect container for the four-fold collection of the canonical Gospels (Roberts and Skeat 1993) or for a selection of the Pauline epistles that were considered authentic (Gamble 1995).

Such proposals do not convince on an evidentiary level because we simply lack early enough papyri that might be reconstructed to contain all the canonical Gospels or a sizeable number of Pauline letters. On the contrary, all these texts were continuously copied in codices carrying only a couple of Gospels or some epistles well into the time in which the codex had become the dominant format for any kind of writing (between the fourth and fifth centuries CE). On a more explicitly methodological level, to suggest that the codex format was actually invented to contain a specific selection of writings is tantamount to reinstating the traditional preeminence of content over material form with almost complete disregard for the actual physical features of the latter.

More recently and more appropriately from a theoretical point of view, Roger Bagnall has shown that the evidence points against the conclusion that the codex was invented by Christians (Bagnall 2009: 70–90). Indeed, if one looks systematically through the extant datable exemplars of Egyptian codices, it becomes clear that the earliest instances at our disposal do not carry texts that can be identified as Christian because of their contents. Already beginning in the first century CE, one encounters codices whose contents can be better designated as 'practical' or professional in nature, such as grammars, astronomic or astrologic treatises, or collections of medical recipes. Moreover, despite the clear preference for the codex that characterizes explicitly Christian compositions, from the second century well into the fourth Christian texts inscribed in codices are clearly never more than 40 percent of the total, indicating that the codex format could be and was indeed employed for a very diverse set of purposes.

Observations such as Bagnall's have spurred scholars to propose alternative explanations for the emergence of the codex, usually more independent from Christianity and more attentive to the specific material features of the new format. For instance, it has been suggested that the codex might have been less expensive than the bookroll, since in codices the writing surface is used in a less wasteful manner and papyrus was indeed a rather costly commodity in antiquity. Indeed, the most luxurious ancient bookrolls seem to be designed to showcase the means of the people who paid for them, to the extent that their wider margins and obviously the entire surface of the back that was left intentionally blank can be described—in the words of William Johnson—as a form of 'conspicuous consumption.' However, the overwhelming majority of ancient bookrolls were not conceived according to this design, and more recent calculations have enabled us to establish that the shift to the codex did not in fact afford remarkably significant financial savings for ancient writers.

Others have proposed identifying the reasons behind the shift as the fact that the codex would have been an easier medium for the public reading of texts that arguably took place in the liturgical context of the early Christian communities. However, as we will have the opportunity to discuss below, it is still uncertain what material characteristics can enable us to distinguish ancient manuscripts that were prepared for public reading from those designed for a mere 'private' use. Something that has been established with a degree of certainty is that—in manuscripts that were written without marking the separation between words, in *scriptio continua*, which was the norm for all ancient writing both in bookrolls and codices—the number of letters that can normally be grasped with a single glance of the human eye corresponds more or less exactly to those contained in a line of the narrow columns that one encounters in bookrolls. In this perspective, it appears that codices—in particular,

the early examples of Christian codices carrying Gospels or Pauline letters and written in a single, wide column that occupies almost the entire space of a page—were not the chosen medium for public reading. This conclusion is supported by the observation, as noted above, that the non-Christian codices mostly carry writings that were not certainly intended for public reading, such as collections of medical recipes or grammatical handbooks. In a later period, when Christians began to prepare luxury biblical manuscripts whose main goals were probably display as well as public reading, the page organization will revert to narrow columns (the best example being in all likelihood that of Codex Sinaiticus with its broad pages divided into four columns separated by wide margins).

In sum, the reasons that led to the success of the codex over the bookroll remain largely unclear despite decades of intense debate on the issue. It seems quite evident, however, that not only did the Christians not invent this format, but also that the reasons behind this epoch-making shift are not necessarily tied to the Christian preference for the codex. From what has been observed above regarding the types of texts that are more often inscribed on codices (professional and 'practical' writings as opposed to the 'high' Greek literature carried by the traditional bookroll), it might be possible to conclude that the codex format might have felt more familiar for intellectuals who occupied a sub-elite social position and could not afford the costly services of professional scribes, but were sufficiently educated to produce the texts that they needed on their own (Kloppenborg 2014). In the above-mentioned study, Roger Bagnall has also suggested an alternative origin for the codex format by connecting it with the booklets composed of joined wooden and waxed tablets that were quite common in the west and particularly in Rome (see Chapter 16 of this volume for several photographs and drawings of such tablets recently found in London). Indeed, the time period that witnesses the emergence and ultimate success of the codex is the same in which Rome conquers the eastern Mediterranean, a few centuries of momentous changes in which several Roman cultural habits and preferences made their way through the eastern regions in the context of a trajectory that used to be called 'Romanization.' This is still very much a very hypothetical proposal, but it makes sense to understand the spread of the codex and the Christian preference for this format as another instance of 'Romanization,' since many other features of the diffusion of the Christ movement throughout the Mediterranean can indeed be seen as manifestations of it.

While the origins and most of the functions associated with the early appearance of the codex format remain shrouded in mystery, a few elements connected with the Christian use of it have become clearer in recent years. For instance, it is quite uncontroversial to note that Christians did not copy all their texts on codices. From early on and then more consistently in the later period, Christians continued to employ the bookroll, but the choice of what writings were to be copied in either format does not seem to have been governed by mere chance or preference of the scribe. Indeed, the books that were later included in the New Testament collection are almost invariably copied on codices. The only two exceptions to such a rule (P^{98} containing a few verses from the *Apocalypse of John* and P^{13} carrying a more substantial part of *Hebrews*) concern two texts that were more or less at the margins of the canon and are both written on the back of reemployed bookrolls, indicating that they were produced as occasional pieces or, as in the case of P^{98}, even possibly as writing exercises. On the other hand, writings that are clearly distinct from those later included in the New Testament are regularly copied on traditional bookrolls. That is the case, for instance, of a very early copy (datable paleographically to the late second or early third century CE) of Irenaeus's *Adversus Haereses* discovered in Oxyrhynchus (P. Oxy 3 405, LDAB 2459) or of a third-century copy of Julius Africanus's *Cesti* again from Oxyrhynchus (P. Oxy 3 412, LDAB 2550). This apparently neat distinction might lead one to use this material evidence as proof that the New Testament canon was already somewhat established even before its official ratification in various documents of the fourth century. However, the full picture is much more complicated than that. Besides the two categories described above, one encounters several other texts that ended up not being included in the New Testament canon, but are nevertheless witnessed on codices in the period preceding the fifth century CE. A very interesting case is that of the *Gospel of Thomas*, which has been recently studied in detail by

AnneMarie Luijendijk (2011). Three incomplete fragments of the Greek version of this Gospel have been found in Oxyrhynchus (P. Oxy 1 1; 4 655, 656; LDAB 4028–4030). They all come from three different copies of this writing (incidentally witnessing to the high degree of popularity enjoyed by the *Gospel of Thomas* in the period at hand) and are datable paleographically between the end of the second and the beginning of the third century. While two of these copies of the Gospel are written on bookrolls, one of them comes from a codex. The same happens also for other early Christian writings that later were considered apocryphal, such as the *Gospel of Mary* (P. Ryl. 463; LDAB 5329) or the otherwise unknown Gospel designated as Egerton (P. Lond. Christ. 1 + P. Köln 6 255; LDAB 4736). Luijendijk analyzes these data in conjunction with early Christian indirect witnesses of the use of the *Gospel of Thomas* in liturgical contexts. Her convincing conclusion is that some early Christian groups considered this Gospel an inspired text and as such they copied it in the codex format instead of as a bookroll. The same in all likelihood was the case for the *Gospel of Mary* and the Egerton papyrus. The observation that early Christian scribes 'reserved' the codex format for writings that were considered 'inspired' (to use the term 'canonical' for this early period would be anachronistic) has far-reaching consequences inasmuch as it enables us to see 'on the ground' the fluidity and pluriformity that characterized early Christ groups not only at a doctrinal level, but also in the choice of their foundational texts. In general, such conclusions are strengthened, for instance, by the analysis of the manuscript transmission of a very important (although now almost completely neglected outside the academic circles) early Christian text, the *Shepherd,* composed sometime in the second century by the Roman Hermas. In all likelihood, the *Shepherd* was a wildly popular text among early Christians in the centuries that we are examining here. The number of copies of Hermas's work discovered in Egypt and datable before the fourth century is bigger than any of the New Testament books, rivalling the two most popular Gospels of Matthew and John. Given such a significant and widespread success, it is unsurprising to observe that one encounters remarkable pieces of evidence to the effect that the *Shepherd* was considered an 'inspired' work by several early Christian authors and groups. Interestingly enough, the most important witness to the text of the New Testament at our disposal, the fourth-century *Codex Sinaiticus*, includes Hermas's work in its 'canon' by placing the *Shepherd* in the collection, immediately following the *Apocalypse of John*. On the basis of these observations, it cannot be surprising to see that almost all the extant copies of the *Shepherd* datable before the fifth century are codices, thereby confirming the hypothesis that such a format was preferred by early Christian scribes when they intended to copy a text that was deemed 'inspired' or, to use a less fraught formulation, particularly authoritative (Choat and Yuen-Collingridge 2010).

The identification of ancient books produced for or belonging to early Christian groups is a problematic affair when one wants to go beyond the texts mentioned above, whose contents themselves indicate a connection to the Christ movement. As far as papyri are concerned (and as we will have the opportunity to repeat again in the course of the present analysis), the ancient habit of not putting any indication of ownership on literary manuscripts generates for scholars interested in early Christianity the same set of problems faced by classicists intent on reconstructing the contents of ancient libraries from the scattered remains of the papyrological record. Thus, scholars have been at work for decades in an attempt to select specific physical traits that might allow us to identify a given piece as 'Christian.' As already discussed at length, the codex format is often invoked in these discussions on the debatable assumption that it was employed only by Christians. An additional problem should be considered alongside those already mentioned: even as one assumes that all the codices whose content is biblical should be treated as Christian products, there remains the issue of those manuscripts that carry Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible. On what grounds should these papyri be considered Christian? Is it not possible that at least some of them might have been Jewish products and that they might have been used in the liturgy of Greek-speaking Egyptian synagogues (Kraft 2007)? The question is rather complicated and its intractability is further enhanced by the current reconsideration of traditional theories on the 'parting of the ways' between Christianity and Judaism. Several scholars are now inclined to think that such a separation took place much later than

was previously assumed and that it was far from a neat and clear-cut break, leaving instead significant areas of fuzziness and overlap (see, for instance, Boyarin 2009).

Two other elements indicating the connection between a papyrus and Christ groups deserve to be mentioned and discussed here, since they can also be accounted for as possibly the earliest instances of a specific Christian material culture. The first one is that of the so-called *nomina sacra* (for the early identification of this feature and its name, see Traube 1907 and Paap 1959). These are a series of roughly 15 Greek words that are written in a special manner in biblical as well as non-literary (mostly private letters and amulets) papyri that are considered Christian (Hurtado 2006: 95–134). For example, it is quite common in these manuscripts that when the scribe comes to a point in which he or she has to write the word 'Christ' (Χριστός in Greek), instead of writing out the full word the scribe writes only the first (*chi*) and the last letter (which obviously varies according to the different cases and thus different forms that the word can assume in the sentence) of it. That the name has been abbreviated in this way is signaled by the scribe by putting a horizontal line that stretches over both the letters forming the *nomen sacrum*. The list of the words that receive such a treatment is somewhat long and surprising, since it contains obvious elements such as 'God' (*theos*), 'Lord' (*kyrios*), 'Jesus' (*Iesous*), and 'Christ' (which are the most regular subjects of the abbreviation), but also more unexpected items such as 'spirit' (*pneuma*), 'human being' (*anthropos*), 'son' (*huios*), 'father' (*pater*), 'cross' (*stauros*), 'David' (*Daueid*), 'mother' (*mēter*), 'savior' (*sōter*), 'Israel,' 'Jerusalem,' and 'heaven' (*ouranos*).[1]

The origins of such a scribal practice are the object of an interesting scholarly debate. Most scholars argue that since the names that are treated in this way at the earliest period and most systematically are 'God' and 'Lord,' *nomina sacra* might have begun as a Christian imitation of the Jewish use to substitute or 'hide' the name of God in the copies of their sacred texts. Such scribal habits are well attested in the Hebrew manuscripts discovered at Qumran and also in the few Greek biblical exemplars that can be assuredly considered Jewish (Tov 2004). Such a hypothesis seems eminently reasonable, particularly if one considers that the early Christ groups remained Jewish or close to Judaism for a much longer period than it is usually conceded in traditional historical reconstructions of the 'parting of the ways.' Nevertheless, it is also worth remembering that the scribal practices attested for the name of God in Jewish manuscripts are varied and no one of them resembles structurally the *nomina sacra* as they have been described above. The closest parallel to the Christian *nomina sacra* from a purely formal point of view is to be found in the practice—widespread in the composition of documents on papyrus—of highlighting Greek letters that should be taken as numbers (and not as sounds forming a word) by tracing a horizontal stroke above them. Since we have seen already above that in all likelihood most of the New Testament scribes arguably had a background in documentary writing more than in the transcription of bookrolls, it stands to reason to suggest that their familiarity with written numbers might have inspired at the very least the mechanics of *nomina sacra*.

Such considerations on the origin of *nomina sacra* also lead us to talk briefly about the more important issue of their significance. Hurtado and others have suggested that if the first *nomina sacra* to be noted were 'God' and 'lord' as an imitation of the Jewish respect for the divine name, then the addition to them of 'Jesus' and 'Christ' might indeed be quite relevant for our understanding of the earliest stages of christology. Hurtado argues that the move to associate the name of 'Jesus' with that of 'God' in such a scribal practice (and at such an early date) should be taken as an indicator of what the same scholar has called 'devotion' towards the divinity of Jesus Christ and thus as a manifestation of an emergent binitarism in Christ groups. In Hurtado's perspective, thus, the use of *nomina sacra* would reflect a deliberate theological analysis of the texts on the part of its copyists and the resulting manuscripts would then constitute the earliest extant examples of a Christian exegetical practice on the New Testament texts. That is the case, for instance, for P^{66} (P. Bodmer 2, LDAB 2777, datable to the first half of the third century and containing a substantial part of the *Gospel of John*) in which the scribe distinguished systematically between 'God' (*theos* in the singular), which is written as a *nomen sacrum*, and 'gods' (*theoi*, in the plural), which is always written in full. According to some, such an early establishment of rules (which were then followed quite systematically in copying

New Testament manuscripts, but also composing private letters and other similarly occasional documents) would indicate a degree of centralization and cohesiveness among Christ groups that is not usually admitted in the most recent historical reconstruction, which in turn privilege models of differentiation and multiplicity (Trobisch 2000).

That being said, more recent examinations of *nomina sacra*, besides the four on which Hurtado's reflections have mostly focused, show that the patterns of employment of this scribal technique are less systematic than previously assumed (Treu 1973). For instance, Christopher Tuckett has noted that the treatment of the Greek *anthropos* ('human being') appears to be fairly old in the papyrological record (it occurs in P^{46}, the oldest extant collection of Pauline epistles, in P. Chester-Beatty 4, containing the biblical book of *Numbers*, and in P. Oxy 1, containing a few sayings from the *Gospel of Thomas*, all datable to roughly the beginning of the third century), but seems to lack any of the systematic application that characterizes some of the other *nomina sacra*. These observations would lead one to think that the practice was more of a widespread habit than a centralized scribal rule (Tuckett 2003). Even its exegetical and theological significance can sometimes be questioned. In a very recent survey of the uses of *pneuma* ('spirit') as *nomen sacrum* in the above-mentioned P^{46}, Joel Estes has noticed that the scribe does not seem to have differentiated consistently between the passages in which the Greek term referred to a divine 'Spirit' and those in which it indicated the 'spirit' of humans (Estes 2015).

The final Christian feature that is worth mentioning in this context is the monogram composed by the combination of the two Greek letters *tau* (which has the shape of a Latin T) and *rho* (shaped as a vertical stroke with a small circle slightly bent to the right at the top) and usually designated as 'staurogram' (Hurtado 2006: 135–54), *stauros* being the Greek word for cross. In the staurogram, the two letters share the vertical trait, so that the circle of *rho* ends up being placed right above the horizontal stroke of *tau*. Monograms are not uncommon in Christian written artifacts. Two other well-known examples are the *chi-rho* combination, which is intended to shorten the name 'Christos,' and the *iota-eta* combination, which puts together the two first letters of the name 'Iesous.' The staurogram is less widespread than the two monograms just mentioned and it does not seem to have been created in order to express, in a shortened form, the name of Jesus Christ. The *tau-rho* combination occurs in three New Testament papyri (P^{45}, containing the five Gospels plus canonical *Acts*, P^{75} (Papyrus Bodmer)[2] carrying portions of Luke and John, and the above-mentioned P^{66}) in a series of verses that have forms of the Greek noun 'cross' (σταυρός) or the verb 'crucify' (σταυρόω). The staurogram is inserted within the word to replace the cluster of letters *-taur-*, so that what is left of the original word is merely the initial *sigma* and the suffix that changes according to the case. The cluster is completed with a superlinear horizontal stroke that makes the entire word look very similar to a *nomen sacrum*.

The origin of the staurogram is a matter of some debate, but it seems likely—from the shape of the monogram itself—that it might have been inspired by the very similar *ankh* sign, which is very widespread in Egyptian religious iconography (Savignac 1963). With respect to the very shape of the staurogram, Hurtado has insightfully noted that besides being a nice combination of letters, its resulting shape clearly evokes in a stylized form the sketch of a human being nailed to a cross. In this perspective, the staurogram should be understood as a locale in which the textual and the visual intersect and intertwine in a very evocative way.

Some scholars have objected that to postulate that the staurogram actually was understood as a representation of Jesus's crucifixion would violate the traditional principle that Christians did not represent that scene until after Constantine (see, for instance, this position in Snyder 2003). In recent years, however, Bruce Longenecker (2015) has built a strong argument to the effect that the Christian avoidance of the cross and crucifixion in the pre-Constantinian period should not be taken as a rule, but at best as a tendency for which it is entirely possible to envisage exceptions. That being said, one must also observe that such exceptions should not be pushed—as Hurtado himself seems to do at times—to conclude that the handful of occurrences of the staurogram might demonstrate that the cross and Jesus's crucifixion played a fundamental role in the theology and devotion

of the early Christ groups. In this perspective, it is also worth noting that the traditional datings of P^{66} and P^{75} to the third century have been recently reconsidered by Brent Nongbri, who has authoritatively suggested that both manuscripts could be redated to the fourth century (2014, 2016). If Nongbri's palaeographic arguments prove convincing, the bulk of the occurrences of the staurogram in Christian papyri will turn out to be post-Constantinian after all (considering also that the third manuscript discussed here, P^{45}, in fact contains only one instance of the staurogram).

Private letters and other documentary papyri

Documentary papyrology deals with a very heterogeneous, but also extremely rich, assemblage of diverse materials. Almost since Egyptian documents began to arrive in scores in Europe during the golden age of papyrology, such a promising trove has been mined by scholars searching for information about the 'real' everyday life of Christian individuals and groups. While the potential yield of documentary papyri remains very high (and new pieces are continuously discovered and edited), several decades of critical discussions have brought about a methodologically more sophisticated approach to these studies.

Possibly the most significant examples of the difference made by such a change of methodological attitude can be encountered in the attempt at identifying private letters whose authors might have been Christian. For instance, decades ago it could be stated without encountering much opposition that letters in which senders referred to themselves or to their addressees using terminology of kinship (chiefly the language of being *adelphos* ('brother') or *adelphē* ('sister')), when they were not actually members of the same family, could be reasonably considered Christian (this is a methodological problem that afflicts the still widely used anthology of Christian letters put together by Naldini 1998 and that should give pause to anyone relying on it). More recent analysis has demonstrated that fictive kinship language was not used only within Christ groups in antiquity, but was in fact quite widespread not only as a means to express personal affection, but also as a way to indicate the common membership in a voluntary association (Artz-Grabner 2002). Likewise, a feature that earlier scholarship often singled out as an indicator of Christianity was the use of so-called 'monotheistic phrases.' These are a select number of Greek phrases that include the term *theos* ('God,' in the singular) and that can be interpreted to imply that the user presupposes the existence of only one deity. For instance, in P. Bas 18, a letter whose provenance is unknown and is palaeographically dated to the first century CE, Pasis writes to Orsenouphis calling him 'brother.' In this case, they can actually be members of the same family, because Pasis asks Orsenouphis to take care of his wife during his absence. However, the little message ends (lines 9–10) with Pasis's wish to come to the addressee (and arguably to his family) soon 'if the God wants' (ἐὰν ὁ θεὸς θέλῃ). It is easy to see how one may be tempted to take such a phrase as a signifier of Christianity, both on account of the presence in the same letter of kinship language and of the fact that similar-sounding expressions have become quite widespread in several Christian contexts in the following centuries. Nevertheless, it is also important, as many further studies have shown, to keep in mind that identical phrases are quite common in letters, which are unequivocally 'pagan' (as when the *theos* in question happens to be Sarapis) or can be attributed to writers belonging to groups whose relationship to Christianity is questionable, as happens in our rich record of Manichean epistles (Choat 2006).

An obvious element that has always attracted the attention of scholars is the presence of the *nomen christianum*, on the assumption that early Christians might have been keen to identify themselves as such in writing to their fellow Christ-believers or even to others. But the emergent picture is actually much different than expected. Lincoln Blumell (2012) has recently offered a very thorough examination of all the private letters on papyrus coming from Oxyrhynchus, a site in middle Egypt that has yielded thousands of pieces dating to the Roman period, so that one can safely state that this town is possibly the ancient urban center on whose daily life we are best informed. Out of a database comprising more than 100 letters, Blumell identifies only three occurrences of the term 'Christian' in

SB 12 10772 (dated to the third century), P. Laur 2 42 (fourth or fifth century), and P. Oxy 43 3149 (fifth century). Even among these three meager instances, two have to be discounted because the references to a 'Christian' are only indirect and thus do not allow us to conclude in any firm way that the two letters might have indeed been written by someone who was a Christian himself or herself. That is the case for the earliest document, SB 10772, which indeed includes an indirect mention of Sotas, possibly a character that we will encounter again later and who is further identified—in a partially reconstructed section of the papyrus—as 'the Christian' (ὁ κρησιανός [sic]). The mention of the *nomen christianum* does not allow us to conclude that the writer of the letter was himself a Christian (in fact his very 'pagan' name, Sarapammon, and that of his addressee, his mother Olympias, would actually suggest otherwise). In any event, Blumell notes that if the letter were to be considered Christian, it would be an important piece of evidence in favor of the trans-Mediterranean ties among Christ groups and individual Christ-believers, because Sarapammon writes from Antioch in Syria and the message was received in Oxyrhynchus in Egypt (Blumell and Wayment 2015).

Thus, the earliest (and astoundingly only direct use) of the *nomen christianum* in the vast papyrological record of Oxyrhynchus remains the fifth-century P. Oxy 3149, in which a certain Heras writes a letter of recommendation for the slave Heortasius, who is also the carrier of the message, to Apa Theon. Heras makes explicitly clear in the very first lines of the letter that he is a 'Christian' (ὁ κρητιανός [sic]), in keeping with the conventions of recommendations, since he wants to capture the favor of Theon, who in turn is certainly a monastic or church official. That the letter is written by a Christian who wants to assert his identification is further confirmed by the fact that Heras drew a Latin cross at the very beginning of the message and greets Theon 'in the lord God' (ἐν κυρίῳ θεῷ), a phrase that is employed almost exclusively in writings that are most certainly Christian (and, in this case, is inscribed as a *nomen sacrum*).

However, the relatively late date of P. Oxy 3149, even more than its being the single example of a direct use of the *nomen christianum*, leads us to ask why early Christians did not make their allegiance to the Christ movement more explicit in private letters as well as in other types of documents. Indeed, once one has applied careful methodological principles for the identification of Christian letters, the statistics put together by Blumell with respect to Oxyrhynchus are quite surprising. First of all, identifiable Christian letters are extant only from the third century on. That is the period from which one can begin to encounter traits that can be considered unquestionable marks of Christianness, such as the *nomina sacra*, the crosses drawn at the beginning of the letters, or some specific sigla that are technically designated as 'isopsephims.' The latter category includes monograms that take advantage in their composition of the fact that Greek uses alphabetical signs to indicate both sounds and numbers (the most widely known example of Christian isopsephism is certainly the 'number of the beast' given in the *Apocalypse of John* as corresponding to 666, the numerical value of the letters forming the name of the Antichrist). An isopsephism that begins to appear in letters written between the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth century is the number 99 (written as in Greek), which correspond to the value of the letters in the word 'amen' (ἀμήν) and is thus used at the conclusion of several letters (Blumell 2012: 46–8).

The relative lack of Christian markers in private letters until the second half of the third century is mirrored in other types of documentation. For instance (and remaining within Oxyrhynchus), Blumell and Wayment note that the earliest documents attesting to the presence of Christians in the city are copies of the *libelli* that were issued in 250, following the emperor Decius's order that all the citizens of the empire be forced to offer sacrifice. The *libelli* are the certificates that the commissions, expressly appointed to check on the performance of sacrifices, issued to the people who had actually done the act (or had bribed the committee in order to get a *libellus* without having to go through the act). Such certificates are extant from all over Egypt (and the Oxyrhynchus's ones are P. Oxy 4 658; 12 1464; 41 2990; and 58 3929), but at best they attest indirectly to the presence of Christians in the region, since arguably the people who did sacrifice and thus requested them were not Christ-believers. Significantly more important might be P. Oxy 42 3035 (dated to February 28, 256), which

is a summons for an otherwise unknown Petosorapis, who is identified as a 'Christian' (χρησιανός). It is difficult to tell whether Petosorapis is being sought because he is a Christian (pointing towards a context of persecution) or the reference to him as a 'Christian' indicates his profession (as it happens often in this type of document), so that one might argue that Petosorapis might have been a member of the Christian clergy (Blumell and Wayment 2015: 393–7).

Be that as it may, all the evidence underscores how meager is our information on Oxyrhynchite (and, generally speaking, Egyptian) Christians before the end of the fourth century. Such a datum calls for some sort of historical explanation, in particular because over the same period Egyptian Christianity seems to have had a level of theological and literary production that surpasses—in its size and sophistication—almost any other Mediterranean region (to this effect, it will suffice to mention only the names of Clement, Heracleon, Origen, and Valentinus). Traditional explanations hypothesized that Christ followers avoided mentioning their allegiance even in private letters in order to escape the notice of the Roman government and thus the risk of persecution (Rémondon 1952). While this interpretation does resonate with some of the earliest pieces of evidence examined above, it is worth remembering that it presupposed on the part of the Roman administration an ability to control and a willingness to check even exchanges of personal communications that is frankly unthinkable for an ancient empire. More recently, Roger Bagnall has suggested that the lack of evidence of a Christian presence in the Egyptian countryside should be taken at face value to conclude that Christianity was present only in Alexandria (from which we have very little papyrological information and which nevertheless sustained the sophisticated and creative thinking of figures such as Valentinus or Origen). Only tenuously during the third and fourth centuries do Christ groups begin to appear in the Egyptian countryside, a state of affairs that would account for the limited presence of evidence even over those 200 years (Bagnall 2009: chapter 1). A less radical answer to the historical problem might be the one entertained by Blumell and others, who correctly draw attention to the specific limitations that characterize private letters as well as other types of ancient documentary writings. While these texts do indeed offer a different perspective on everyday life in antiquity with respect to the literary products emanating almost exclusively from the elites, one cannot really say that they convey a direct and unbiased representation of ancient life. For instance, writers of private letters do not tend to give each and every piece of information on their identity when they write, assuming obviously that their addressees in most cases already know them. Thus, in most cases it is quite likely that senders did not include in their letters a mention of the *nomen christianum* because their addressees already knew about their ties to the Christ movement.

As noted above with respect to the statistics put together by Blumell, in the third and fourth centuries Christians are a very minor percentage of the total (3 percent in the third and no more than 15 percent in the fourth century). However, the ratio begins to raise significantly between the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century to reach 100 percent in the sixth and seventh centuries. This might indicate that the massive Christianization of Oxyrhynchus took place from the end of the fourth century. Here the data provided by the analysis of onomastics (which is particularly rich in private letters and in other documents preserved on papyrus) can be very helpful.

Onomastics was often an obviously primary object of study for scholars interested in tracing the spread of Christianity in Egypt (Bagnall 1982, 1987). But here too one must exercise methodological caution, because it appears that ancient 'converts' to Christianity neither changed their names to make them look more Christian nor gave Christian-sounding names to their children (cases in point may be that of the Petosorapis encountered above or of Origen himself, whose parents were apparently Christian). Nevertheless, the statistics of the percentage of Christian names encountered in the letters from Oxyrhynchus put together by Blumell (2012: 275–9) seem to map almost exactly those of the Christian letters against the overall number of surviving messages. Christian names begin to appear in the record in the third century and then they remain at a low percentage (around 15 percent) throughout the fourth century, to spike decidedly at the turn of the fifth century (when they go up to 45 percent) and to start a progressive increase that would bring them to be 60 or 70 percent of

the total in the sixth and seventh centuries. The onomastic evidence confirms the hypothesis that the bulk of the Christianization (at least in the area of Oxyrhynchus) took place not with the 'conversion' of Constantine (which instead seems to have left things mostly unchanged), but later on, at the end of the century and possibly in connection with the edict of Theodosius, who in 381 banned 'pagan' cults from the Roman empire.

Besides what has been briefly said about private letters, the other types of texts that are usually listed under the heterogeneous label 'documentary' yield an enormous amount of information on the several aspects of the early Christian history. As noted above, for the first two or three centuries direct witnesses to Christ groups are hard to come by in the documentary record, but this limitation does not diminish the importance of this evidence for a better understanding of this formative period. Such an opportunity had been already recognized by Adolf Deissmann (1927) in the golden age of papyrology, but his approach has been revived and improved recently in a series of ongoing and comprehensive publications. At least two of them should be mentioned here. The first is the *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* series, published by scholars connected to the Australian Macquarie University, which surveys yearly publications in papyrology and epigraphy that might be of interest for the historical study of the Christ movement. The second series is the *Papyrologische Komentare zum Neuen Testament* (*Papyrological Commentaries of the New Testament*) (PKNT) edited by an international team based in the Austrian University of Salzburg. The series aims at covering the entire New Testament with volumes devoted to single books (volumes of 1 and 2 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon are already published) and each prepared by a different scholar. The ultimate goal of the PKNT is to provide New Testament scholars with a tool that would indicate to them what can be gained through a systematic comparison between biblical texts and documentary evidence. As recognized already by Deissmann, the latter can be extremely helpful not only towards a more adequate lexicographical assessment of the Greek *Koine* that is employed by the majority of New Testament authors, but also to shed light on a host of socio-cultural themes that the early Christian texts (because of their very literary nature) leave unspoken assuming that readers are already acquainted with them. That is the case for issues as diverse as systems of education and learning (Cribiore 1996), socio-economic structures (Kloppenborg 2006), the status of women in ancient society (Bagnall and Cribiore 2006), or the literary and legal treatment of slaves (Bagnall 2011: 54–74).

When one begins to encounter Christian papyri (as we have seen above roughly in the second half of the third century and then more and more substantially in the following period), the information yielded by documentary texts starts to be more directly relevant and helpful to trace a history of Christ groups besides the topic of their diffusion, which has been reviewed above. The most interesting data are those gleaned by 'archives' or dossiers composed of multiple papyri belonging or related to the same individual or group, which were kept together in antiquity or could be reconstituted by modern scholars. Thus, for instance, AnneMarie Luijendijk has succeeded in piecing together part of the correspondence of Sotas, arguably one of the first Christian bishops of Oxyrhynchus in the second half of the third century, and thus provides precious insights into his everyday activities of fundraising, travel, and book production (Luijendijk 2008: 81–151).

In later periods, the materials at our disposal become even richer and they offer the possibility of novel (and largely still unexplored) insights into the religiously, culturally, and linguistic diverse life that characterized Egyptian Christianity from the fourth century on. For instance, very recently a thorough reexamination of the codicology of the famous Nag Hammadi codices and of the very documents that were used to build their covers has enabled scholars to reopen the debate concerning the origins of these enormously important artifacts and their contents, offering at the same time new vistas on the everyday life of Egyptian monasteries and the theological pluriformity of these institutions (Lundhaug and Jenott 2015). Again, archaeological excavations in the western oasis of Kellis have brought to light a rich dossier of literary and documentary papyri that belonged to a Manichaean community inhabiting the area at the end of the fourth century. Not only do these pieces provide one with information

about the everyday life of these groups (for once, not filtered through the polemics of their Christian opponents), but they also illuminate their evangelizing activities in Egypt, their work of translation of Manichaean sacred texts from Syriac into Coptic, and perhaps even their attitude towards the Christian 'persecution' beginning in those years against them (Gardner and Lieu 1996).

Texts of ritual power: amulets, *lamellae*, and gems

A third even worse-defined category of papyrological materials comprises those that are usually labeled as 'magic,' following the title of a landmark collection, the *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, edited by Karl Preisendanz in the early twentieth century. The very label 'magic' is notoriously problematic both because it is fraught with ideological baggage (Otto 2013) and because—in the specific case of papyri that have been deemed 'magic'—the categorization has led scholars to 'extract' the texts from their original contexts and to lose sight of the fact that ancient users and readers did not in fact operate according to the binary magic/religion (Mazza 2007).

That being said, these materials—once used outside the constraints of this traditional categorization—prove themselves to be exceptionally good sources of information about lived religion in Egypt in late antiquity (and arguably in the eastern Mediterranean more in general). The big codices included in the first volume of Preisendanz's collection and perhaps forming the so-called 'Theban magic library,' discovered in the early nineteenth century by the archaeologist/looter Anastasy, have mostly held the attention of scholars. The codices are dated to the third or fourth century and in the diversity of their languages (Greek, Demotic, Old Coptic) and their contents mirror the plurality and fluidity of Egyptian society and religiosity in the same period. They were in all likelihood produced by professionals attached to traditional Egyptian temples and, as such, display a rich combination of very practical spells and impassionate prayers and hymns, in which Jewish and Christian elements are often mobilized alongside Egyptian, Greek, and other even more foreign invocations (Dieleman 2005).

Besides (and often obscured by) these major codices, the category of texts of ritual power includes a host of minor pieces (amulets, *lamellae*, or gems) that were generally disregarded by traditional scholarship as examples of 'popular' religiosity. With the turning of the scholarly tides towards an increased attention to evidence of 'lived' religion, the publication and study of these materials has picked up its pace significantly in recent years. In a recent survey of Greek and Latin Christian amulets (but one already superseded by new discoveries and editions), Theodore de Bruyn and Jitse Dijkstra have counted roughly 186 pieces (2011). This long list does not include the analogous pieces written in Coptic, which are going to be even more numerous (Meyer 1999). Other important pieces that are not strictly speaking amulets can be found inscribed either on metal *lamellae* (Kotansky 1994) or on gems (Spier 2007).

Several of these pieces are important witnesses for some biblical texts that evidently were considered most powerful by early Christian users and were thus inscribed on these artifacts. This is the case for the Lord's prayer, the beginning verses of the four canonical Gospels, or Psalm 90, but it is important to note that the choice was by no means limited to texts that were on their way to becoming canonical: thus, for instance, one encounters on amulets of all kinds the letter that Jesus allegedly wrote to Abgar, the king of Edessa, promising divine protection for the Syriac city and which became a beloved protective text all over the eastern Mediterranean in late antiquity (Given 2016).

However, scholars have started to note that the texts inscribed on these artifacts of ritual power are interesting not just because of their textual critical potential (see Kraus 2006). In fact, it is clear both that most ancient users of these amulets, being illiterate, could not read their inscriptions and, even more importantly, that the layout of the texts hints at the fact that the very materiality of the inscribed letters was supposed to carry ritual power (Sanzo 2014; Jones 2015). Such a development in Christian artifacts cannot be surprising because in Egypt (and arguably all over the Mediterranean) writing *per se*—independently of its actual content—has always been attributed religious power.

In this perspective, these late antique artifacts can productively be studied by focusing on their 'poetics,' the performative ways in which their assemblages of texts, letters, images, and other implements are put together by their creators (this integrative approach is brilliantly developed by Joseph Sanzo in a series of recent studies that yield significant results with respect to our knowledge of late antique lived religiosity; see Sanzo 2016).

Epigraphy

Ancient inscriptions are extant in such a plentiful number that their systematic study has so far encountered even bigger obstacles than that of papyri. However, given the broader geographical space covered by epigraphical materials, their analysis can offer even more significant results than those of Egyptian papyrological materials. In truth, the two disciplines of papyrology and epigraphy should work together to offer the best insights into early Christian studies. Most of the initial findings of the study of inscriptions do indeed parallel what has been observed above with respect to papyrology, and thus in this final section I will limit myself to some general remarks and some examples of recent and fruitful research conducted in the specific sub-field of epigraphy.

As already noted with respect to Christian papyri, identifying inscriptions belonging or tied to the Christ movement in the early three centuries is a complicated affair that evokes intricate methodological debates on what counts as a sign of Christianity. However, when some early pieces can be reliably attributed to members of Christ groups, the payoff in terms of our increased understanding is quite significant. For instance, in recent articles, Gregory Snyder (2011, 2014) has proposed dating to the second century a couple of Roman inscriptions which concern the wedding or perhaps the funeral of two women. Snyder convincingly demonstrates that the inscriptions reflect an acquaintance both with sophisticated Greek epigrammatic poetry and Valentinian sacramental symbolism, so that they should be read as exceptionally valuable witnesses about the earliest Roman Christ groups and their lived religiosity (outside the biased representation provided by later heresiologists). Similarly, the hotly discussed honorific inscription of Aberkios, bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor in the early third century, demonstrates the same interest for the reception of traditional 'pagan' poetic style, but also a Christian interest in (imaginary) travels and eucharistic symbolism (Llewelyn 1992).

As for papyri, however, likewise for inscriptions, even those pieces that are not Christian can in fact yield a host of important information on the cultural and social background presupposed by the early texts of the Christ movement. An important example of the uses to which epigraphy can be put in this perspective is the current work done with the very numerous inscriptions related to ancient voluntary associations. Even if the Christ groups were not strictly speaking associations, it is quite clear that authors such as Paul thought about their groups in the ideological terms of contemporary associations and in all likelihood also organized some aspects of their everyday life (fundraising or cult, to name two prominent examples) with the model of associations in mind (Ascough 2003; Ascough *et al.* 2012).

Most extant early Christian inscriptions are not as sophisticated as the examples already mentioned, but are for the most part tombstones with little more than the name of the deceased on them. However, their sheer number and geographical diffusion enable scholars to draw some important statistical conclusions with respect to the spread of Christianity in the Mediterranean. The results are in large measure identical to what has already been said on the basis of the papyrological record: Christian inscriptions begin to appear in the late third century (see Figure 23.1), but their number really starts to pick up only at the end of the fourth century. There are obviously significant exceptions that have—for this very reason—attracted the attention of scholars. For instance, in Phrygia (a region in central Turkey), there is a real outburst of funerary inscriptions datable to the third century, on which the Christian identity of the deceased is stated with great emphasis, often through the use of the still enigmatic phrase 'Christians for Christians' (χριστιανοὶ χριστιανοῖς). Several explanations for this peculiar habit have been proposed, and one very popular among scholars is that the phrase

Figure 23.1 Marble third-century probable Christian funeral stele from Rome, which reads *D(is) M(anibus), Ichthus Zōntōn, Liciniae Amiati Benemerenti vixit* ('To the gods of the underworld: fish of the living; To the well-deserving Licinia Amiatis; she lived . . . '). From the necropolis on the Vatican hill and now in the Epigraphical Museum, Baths of Diocletian, Rome. Wikicommons

would represent a mark of allegiance to the 'New Prophecy' (also called 'montanism' by the heresiologists), an ascetic and millenarian movement that dominated Asia Minor from the second to the fourth centuries (Tabernee 1997).

As with papyri, epigraphy also has its fair share of more popular inscriptions, which were produced by ancient people of a lower social status than that of the elites who wrote the literary texts that have mostly survived to our time. These are graffiti that were probably either painted or scratched on almost any plastered surface of ancient cities. Since this plaster has rarely survived, most of these graffiti have disappeared, but wherever they have luckily been preserved they provide scholars with the opportunity of hearing alternative voices on a host of different subjects and registers, ranging from advertisement to political commentary, from pleas of unrequited love to graphic sexual references (Bagnall 2011: 7–26). The single ancient place where graffiti have survived almost in their entirety is Pompeii, due to the special circumstances of the destruction of the city. This extraordinary situation allows one to reconstruct everyday life at Pompeii in the first century CE to an extent that is unparalleled elsewhere. In turn, the same extraordinary characteristics have invited scholars to look for traces of a Christian presence in the city. With respect to graffiti, something that is periodically brought up in scholarly discussions of materials from Pompeii is the potential presence of crosses. Quite recently, Bruce Longenecker has devoted a very detailed and meticulously researched book to prove that Pompeii actually had several crosses among its many graffiti, witnessing to the early and significant Christian presence in Italy (2016). As noted before, Longenecker's book is well researched and makes some very good points with respect to, for instance, the possibility that indeed Christ followers might have used the image of the cross in some cases even before Constantine. That being said, one must also observe that Longenecker's specific case might not be as solid as it seems, since most of the graffiti

that he considers to be most clearly Christian crosses are actually not extant. For instance, the major support of Longenecker's argument, the artifact found in the bakery of the Insula Arriana Polliana is known to us only through a picture drawn in the nineteenth century by a French scholar who—a detail of no minor importance given the subject matter of debate here—was convinced that it was a Christian cross.

Notes

1 For examples of *nomina sacra*, representing Jesus (the letters ΙΥ beneath a short, horizontal line and God (the letters ΘΥ beneath the horizontal line) in a passage from John 1 in Codex Vaticanus (B), fourth century CE, see upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/61/Nomina_Sacra_in_Codex_Vaticanus_John_1.jpg.

2 For a staurogam in P^{75} (Papyrus Bodmer), with a horizonal line over the staurogram, see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Staurogram#/media/File:P._Bodmer_XIV-XV,_staurogram.jpg.

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24

SCRIPTURES IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Outi Lehtipuu and Hanne von Weissenberg

What did early Christians conceive of as scripture? What texts did they read and use? Who read and used them? How were the books that are now included in the biblical canon chosen? Finding answers to these questions is challenging, not least because of the scarcity of evidence, particularly on the earliest times. Even though scriptures assumed a constitutive role for Jesus' followers from the beginning and early Christian writers constantly appealed to authoritative texts, there is surprisingly little discussion on what actual books were regarded as scripture before the fourth century. It is only then when the term *kanōn* starts to be used in the meaning of a list of normative books (Metzger 1987: 289–293).

Another challenge has to do with perspective: it is not easy to approach the question of early Jewish or Christian scriptures without having in mind the closed canon familiar to scholars today (Brakke 2012: 266–267; Najman 2012: 497–518). This means that historians tend to read sources from within the framework of a fixed list of scriptures and evaluate how close to the ultimate goal, the closed canon, each piece of evidence comes (Mroczek 2015). Historically speaking, this kind of a teleological design is problematic – using a standard which did not exist prior to the fourth century does not do justice to earlier sources. The same goes for nomenclature (Ulrich 2002a; Zahn 2011). It makes little sense to speak of 'canonical' and 'non-canonical' texts in a situation where there was no canon. Moreover, a distinction between canonical and non-canonical too often entails a value judgement: only those texts that became accepted as part of the canon are considered important while those that were not can be dismissed as worthless (Dunderberg 2015: 94–95; Najman 2012: 497–501). Investigation of the rich evidence of the Dead Sea discoveries, providing scholars with the earliest biblical manuscripts and scriptural interpretation, has made it clear that in a period during which there is no Bible as a concept, no book format and no printing culture, 'post-canonical' features such as textual stability and a collection with boundaries are not constitutive of sacred texts (Mroczek 2015). Similarly, comparative study of various religious traditions has shown that the role scripture plays in many present-day Christian and other Western religious communities is not universal and cannot be applied when studying religious traditions of different cultures and times. Instead of books, it may be myths, symbols, rituals, etc. that are the primary carriers of religious authority (Levering 1989).

Our starting point in this chapter is the diversity of the early Christian movement. One sign of this diversity is a broad range of different approaches to scripture. Not all Christians read and

esteemed the same texts and used them in the same way. Even though there was a wide agreement on the authority of the Jewish 'law and prophets' early on, it is not always clear which textual compositions or which textual forms these concepts entailed. And even though most Christians would have read Paul's letters and one or more gospels, there were exceptions, too. Marcion became famous for rejecting the traditional scriptures that were to be known as the Old Testament and for accepting only one *evangelion* (presumably an edited version of the Gospel of Luke) and ten letters of Paul (BeDuhn 2013). For most Christian teachers, Paul was a great authority and they saw themselves as the (only) rightful heirs of the apostolic legacy, fiercely attacking their rivals and accusing them of misunderstanding Paul (Lieu 2010a; Lehtipuu 2015: 87–90). However, some early Christians considered him as an enemy to true Christian belief, and opinions about him varied from acclaim to scorn (Lieu 2010b; Bird and Dodson 2011).

Historical inquiry of early Christian scriptures cannot be restricted to writings that later acquired a canonical status. Neither is canonicity an apt distinctive feature in a practical sense, for in many cases there is no more information about where, by whom and for whom the earliest Christian texts were written, be their later status 'canonical' or 'non-canonical'. As far as reception history is concerned, many of the 'canonical' texts such as the four New Testament Gospels and Paul's letters were widely read and quoted, but this is not a characteristic shared by all texts in our canon. For example, the letters of James, Jude and 2–3 John do not feature any more frequently in early Christian literature than do 'non-canonical' texts such as the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Epistle of Barnabas* or the *Apocalypse of Peter*. Some of these latter texts were included in some of the earliest manuscripts of the New Testament, which means that there were Christians who regarded them as 'canonical', though they are no longer in our New Testament canon.

In what follows, it is impossible to discuss all relevant texts in detail. Instead, we give an overview of the diversity of scriptures in early Christianity. In our discussion, we stick to the customary distinction between 'scriptures', that is, religiously authoritative texts, and 'canon', that is, a fixed list of a selection of scriptures (Sundberg 1968; McDonald and Sanders 2002; Brakke 2012: 264). We confine the use of the word 'canon' to the discussions of the fourth century when this term begins to be used in the sense of a decisive list of the texts of the Old and the New Testament. We also distinguish between authoritative texts and scripture (cf. Ulrich 2002a: 29–30) and take the former as a broader term and 'scripture' as referring to texts that are regarded as sacred, while other texts can also convey authority. For example, when Paul, according to the book of Acts, cites the Greek poet Aratus (Acts 17:28), it is not likely that he (or Luke) considered the poet's text as 'scripture'. Similarly, it is not easy to determine what kind of a status the *Book of Enoch* had for the author of the Epistle of Jude who quotes it (Jude v. 14). Our use of terminology coheres with the change in preferred vocabulary especially among Dead Sea Scrolls scholars: instead of 'biblical' or 'canonical', scholars have begun to use terms such as 'authoritative', 'sacred' or 'S/scriptural' (preferably with a lower case 's') for texts that were gradually gaining a 'special' status in the late Second Temple Judaism. This change in vocabulary has its roots in the attempt to acknowledge the pre-canonical state of textual instability and the lack of a fixed collection, a Bible in the canonical sense of the word.

We set the scene by describing the earliest pandects, that is, manuscripts containing the complete Bible, which originate from the fourth and fifth centuries. It was in this period that the 'canon debates' (cf. McDonald and Sanders 2002), discussions of the limits of the Bible, were conducted. Canon formation was to a large extent part of early Christian polemics; texts were accepted as authoritative scripture and others were rejected 'to protect and project orthodoxy against what [were] perceived as the wild assertions of heresy' (Brooke 1997: 242). To understand the fourth-century debates, we trace earlier developments and scriptural phenomena. As we understand the development of early Judaism and early Christianity as more or less contemporaneous processes, we discuss what can be known of the emergence of Jewish scriptures, especially in the light of Qumran discoveries. The Qumran evidence and New Testament texts share many similarities in the way they understand scripture, and together they shed light on the scriptures of the earliest Jesus-followers. We continue

by considering a variety of texts produced by early Christians: Gospels, epistles and other texts, and raise the question of their readership. We conclude with some observations concerning the formation of the Christian canon.

The first bibles: fourth and fifth centuries

Around the year 330, according to Eusebius, the emperor Constantine ordered fifty copies of 'the divine scriptures' (*tōn theiōn graphōn*) to be produced on parchment in a portable form and delivered to Constantinople (*Vit. Const.* 4.36). What does this imperial order tell us? First, its scope was enormous. A codex including all of 'the holy scriptures' would require a huge amount of animal hides for the production of vellum, numerous proficient scribes and a lot of time (Kraft 2007: 10–11). Second, the order raises the question of why it was needed. Did the churches in Constantinople possess no scriptures? Or did the emperor want to make sure that all churches had the same scriptures? Why did he not indicate what the 'holy scriptures' are – did he not know or did he not care? Did he let Eusebius decide? In this case, would Revelation have been included – the book of whose status Eusebius himself seems to be uncertain (*Hist. eccl.* 3.25.2, 4). Did all fifty codices contain the same texts? It is not possible to answer this question, for it is unlikely that any of these copies has survived. Even though the two oldest codices that encompass the whole Bible are from the fourth century, scholars tend to be skeptical whether either one of them belonged to those produced upon the imperial request (Metzger and Ehrman 2005: 15–16).

Be that as it may, when these two codices, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, together with a third early Bible, the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus are compared, their contents show similarities but also striking differences. In terms of the Old Testament, Vaticanus lacks 1–4 Maccabees, included in the other two, while Alexandrinus also contains Psalm 151. The order of the books also varies significantly (see the chart in McDonald 2007: 442). In all three, the New Testament opens with the four Gospels but there is considerable variation among the rest of the books both in terms of the works included and their order. In Sinaiticus, the Gospels are followed by fourteen letters of Paul (Hebrews is included and placed between 2 Thessalonians and 1 Timothy), after which come Acts, the seven catholic epistles and Revelation. Moreover, Sinaiticus also includes two other early Christian texts, the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Shepherd of Hermas*. Codex Alexandrinus places the book of Acts after the Gospel of John but then come the catholic epistles before the fourteen letters of Paul and the book of Revelation. Here, too, more texts follow: *1–2 Clement* and the *Psalms of Solomon*. The order of the books in Codex Vaticanus is the same as in Alexandrinus but the end of the manuscript is lost from the middle of Hebrews onward (Smith 2014). It is not known whether the missing texts of 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon and Revelation belonged to the original, and what other texts might have been included.

These three great codices are exceptions among biblical manuscripts. Not only are they the oldest Greek codices to contain the complete Bible, they are also the only full Bibles before the twelfth century (Kraft 2007: 11, n. 21). Before they were produced in the fourth and fifth centuries, and for centuries after that, most texts were copied and circulated either individually or as part of a smaller collection, either on scrolls or, to an ever-increasing extent, in codices. This had to do with physical limitations, for it was not practical to increase the size of a scroll endlessly. After the adoption of the codex form, more text could be included in one manuscript, but it was not until the fourth century that volumes large enough to encompass all biblical texts could be produced. Until that time (and beyond), the 'Bible' was a collection of separate scrolls or codices – as is indicated by the name *biblia*, Greek for 'scrolls' (plural). It is clear that there was variation in regard to what scriptures early Christian communities possessed, for different communities had different collections of separate manuscripts at their disposal.

The book-like format also raised the discussion about canonicity to a new level, for it made it necessary to determine what texts should be copied in between the front and the back cover and

what should be left out (Ulrich 2002a: 25). The aforementioned three great codices show that even though there was a general agreement on most of the texts, some fluctuation persisted in regard to the selection of books and to their order. Local variation concerning the order of the books and the contents continued for the entire period when copying was made by hand. As a matter of fact, no complete unanimity was ever reached. The canons of Christian churches still differ from each other, especially in regard to the question of what books are counted among the Old Testament scriptures (see the diagrams, e.g. in McDonald 2007: 443–444).

The manuscript tradition shows that there is no unambiguous answer to the question of what texts early Christians conceived of as scripture. Texts such as *1 Clement*, *Barnabas*, the *Shepherd of Hermas* and *Didache* were in some circles regarded as canonical, and judging by the sheer number of survived manuscripts, they seemed to have been more popular than some of the writings eventually included in the New Testament canon (Gamble 2002: 290). Moreover, sometimes texts that were later canonized were bound in codices together with texts that did not receive a canonical status. A striking example is the third- or fourth-century papyrus P^{72} which contains not only the earliest known copy of 1–2 Peter and Jude but also the *Protevangelium of James* (entitled *Nativity of Mary, Apocalypse of James* in the manuscript), the apocryphal correspondence between Paul and the Corinthians (*3 Corinthians*), the eleventh *Ode of Solomon*, Melito's *Homily on the Passover*, an otherwise unknown hymn fragment, the *Apology of Phileas* and Psalms 33 and 34 (Charlesworth 2012). This case suggests that texts that later made it into the canon (Jude, 1–2 Peter) were not always treated differently from other early Christian texts, but nothing definitive can be said about the level of authority granted to any of these texts.

The Jewish 'Bible' in the late Second Temple period

Contrary to what is commonly assumed, the first Christians did not inherit a ready-made Bible from Judaism. Rather, in light of the Dead Sea Scrolls manuscript evidence, it has become increasingly clear that there was no closed collection of Jewish scriptures in the late Second Temple period. Prior to the Qumran discoveries, there were some indirect indicators to a developing collection, such as in the prologue of the Greek Book of Sirach (*c.* 135 BCE), which refers to 'the Law and the Prophets and the other books of our ancestors', and the Gospel of Luke's (first century CE) reference to 'the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms' (Luke 24:44). The first numerical references to authoritative texts are also found in the first century. Josephus mentions twenty-two ancestral books (*Contra Apionem* 1.8) and *Fourth Ezra* refers to twenty-four books (*4 Ezra* 14:44–45). However, rather than references to a closed collection, the numbers are typological in a manner similar to later patristic canon lists (Mroczek 2016: 160–162).

In the late Second Temple period, there were various, still ongoing canonical processes or developments within Judaism. These are expressed, e.g. by the Greek translations of the separate books of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint (LXX), created gradually between the third and first centuries BCE, and by the so-called biblical manuscripts of the Qumran library. Comparison of the scriptural scrolls from the Judean Desert with Septuagint manuscripts and Josephus' rewriting of biblical history has demonstrated that parallel recensions of biblical books were in circulation in Judea, as well as the diaspora, at least until 100 CE (Ulrich 2002b). Further, the Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrate that this was a period of flourishing literary activity. From a magnitude of textual material that was authored, edited and transmitted, only some texts eventually became part of the Jewish Tanakh and the Christian Old Testament canon. Other authoritative texts of the Second Temple period never gained a place in the final collection. Moreover, not all texts that now are a part of the biblical canon were necessarily considered authoritative, or inspired, when first composed (Ulrich 2003: 4–6). Importantly, nowhere in the Hebrew Bible or the Dead Sea Scrolls are texts explicitly referred to as 'sacred'. As a matter of fact, in Jewish texts, written in Hebrew (Aramaic), the earliest explicit references to 'sacred texts / books' (*kitvei qodesh*) are attested to in rabbinic literature (e.g. m. Šabb. 13:1, m.

Yad. 3:2, 5; 4:6; t. Šabb. 16:1). It is in the Greek texts, written by Josephus (37–100 CE) and Philo of Alexandria (25 BCE–50 CE) where we find a variety of Greek terms referring to sacred writings, usually to the Torah (Bremmer 2010: 340–341).

In the Qumran texts, there are occasional references to 'the Law' or 'the Law and the Prophets', but what exactly these categories entail is not defined (Ulrich 2015: 300–304). For instance, Daniel was counted among the prophets, but we do not know with certainty which books were specifically included in 'the Prophets' in the late Second Temple period (Berthelot 2006). There is no detailed, explicit list of authoritative texts; instead, there are other, commonly agreed criteria to be looked at. For the purpose of defining authoritative Jewish literature, both the number of preserved manuscripts and the secondary use of these texts in later compositions are indicative. The secondary usage includes both explicit exegesis of earlier, authoritative sources, sometimes identified by the formula 'it is written', and the more implicit intertextuality expressed in the rewriting of source texts (i.e. the *Temple Scroll*). Through these indicators, we can figure out tentatively what texts might have been authoritative for the Yahad movement (Ulrich 2015: 304–308). Assumedly, these findings have broader relevance in relation to other Jewish groups too, even though we know little about their preferences, with the well-known exception of the Samaritans, who regarded only the Torah as authoritative.

There is a consensus that the Torah had already gained a widely accepted and authoritative status in Judaism during the late Second Temple period. The importance of the Torah is visible in all the findings of the Dead Sea area (Judean desert) (Tov 2002: 141). This is also indicated by the Greek translation of the Pentateuch. Regardless of the authority of the Torah, the existence of the many rewritten forms of (parts of) the Pentateuchal text in Hebrew, such as the Rewritten Pentateuch manuscripts, raises questions about wherein exactly the authority lies – probably more in the book or in the tradition than in the text or its actual wording. Textual fluidity holds true for several other biblical books in the late Second Temple period too. The existence of parallel versions shows that the authoritative traditions are represented in a plural form at least for some parts, and the ancient scribes dealt with this reality in a variety of ways (Brooke 2005: 103).

The Psalms, Isaiah and at least some of the minor prophets were very likely authoritative as well (for the XII see von Weissenberg 2012). Books that were later rejected from the Jewish canon but which appear to have been authoritative for the Yahad movement include texts such as *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees*. The evidence is much weaker for many other compositions, suggesting a non-authoritative status for them, even though there is more diversity of scholarly opinion concerning these texts. Later canonical books that are often listed as being not authoritative for the Qumran community include Canticles, Qohelet, Ruth, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles (Lange 2002: 22–24; Ulrich 2015: 308). The most likely reason for the rejection of the book of Esther, of which no manuscripts are found in Qumran, was a theological one, related to the Qumranic festival calendar, which has no reference to Purim. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that while Proverbs and Qohelet apparently were not authoritative for the Qumran community, several previously unknown wisdom texts (Instruction 1Q26; 4Q415–418, 418a, 418c, 423; Mysteries 1Q27; 4Q299–301; Beatitudes 4Q525, etc.) were found in the Qumran caves. The probable absence of Chronicles at Qumran may reflect the negative attitude of the Yahad movement towards the contemporary practices in the Temple and the political agenda of the Hasmoneans (Brooke 2007: 35–48). If this interpretation of the data is correct, in this case at least, the rejection of certain books was related to issues of identity.

Jewish scriptures in early Christianity

The Qumran evidence highlights the fact that the Hebrew Bible was still in the making during the time of the Jesus movement. Some scriptural texts enjoyed a clearly authoritative and sacred status that the first Christians would have inherited from Judaism, whereas with others, the jury was still out. In Judaism, the discussion continued with certain texts such as Qohelet, Song of Songs

and Ben Sira long into the rabbinic era as attested by the Mishnah and Talmud (m. Yad. 3:5, 4:6; t. Yad. 2:13). The earliest extant Hebrew codices including all canonical texts date to the medieval times. Early Christian texts reinforce both the picture of the scriptural status of some texts and the vagueness of the limits of scripture. In the New Testament Gospels, Jesus is presented as reading (Luke 4:16–17) and citing (e.g. Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; 21:13, 42) from literature that was to become part of the Old Testament. The introductory formula 'it is written' and similar phrases reveal the authority given to these texts. Indeed, the Gospels reflect the conviction that God speaks through scriptures: 'have you not read what was spoken to you by God' says Jesus, according to Matthew, and cites Exodus (Matt. 22:31–32). Jesus commonly refers to 'the law and prophets' (Matt. 7:12; 22:40; Luke 16:16; 24:44; cf. 'Moses and the prophets' in Luke 16:29, 31). Strikingly, however, the *Gospel of Thomas* presents a Jesus who does not even once refer to scriptures or to any of such heroes of the past as Moses or Abraham. On the contrary, in *Thomas* Jesus dismisses the authority of Jewish prophets (*Gos. Thom.* 52).

In the Qumran materials, in light of both manuscript evidence and exegetical use, the most important biblical books were Genesis, Deuteronomy, Isaiah and the Psalms (Brooke 2007: 93–96). Correspondingly, most frequently cited texts in the New Testament Gospels are Deuteronomy, Psalms, Isaiah and other prophets. On the other hand, several Old Testament texts are not alluded to at all in the New Testament, such as Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Haggai or Song of Songs, Ruth, Ecclesiastes and Esther (Evans 2002: 185). Here, again comparison with the Qumran discoveries is instructive: wheres Habakkuk and Nahum have their own commentaries (1QpHab; 4QpNah), the others are poorly attested, both as manuscripts and as sources for later interpretation.

It is likely that early Christians collected key scriptural texts as proof-texts (the so-called *testimonia*) and arranged them topically to use in their proclamation (Gamble 1995: 25–28; Albl 1999). The phrase 'it is written' or the like occurs more than sixty times in the New Testament writings. Matthew's Gospel in particular reflects the idea that the events of Jesus' birth and life fulfil the words of prophets (cf. Matt. 1:22; 2:15, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 27:35.) Isaiah's song of the suffering servant (Isaiah 53) was early on interpreted as a prophecy of Jesus' sufferings (cf. Acts 8:26–35). Other popular methods included reading scriptural narratives in a typological way (e.g. 1 Cor. 10:4; 15:21–23) and understanding Israel's patriarchs, prophets, kings and other key figures as forerunners and examples of the Christian faith (cf. Rom. 4:1–3; Hebrews 11). Interpretations and rewritings around key biblical figures such as Abraham are also attested in several rewritten scripture compositions found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g. *Genesis Apocryphon*, *4QMidrash on Eschatology*).

The authority and divine origin of Hebrew scriptures were usually taken for granted – although the expression 'holy scriptures' occurs only twice within New Testament texts (Rom. 1:2; 2 Tim. 3:15). One of the few exceptions to this rule was Marcion in the second century who sought to separate Christianity from its Jewish past and rejected Hebrew scriptures altogether. In addition, Paul already added nuances to what the 'divine' origin meant for Christians, for instance, by arguing that the Mosaic law was 'ordained through angels by a mediator' (Gal. 3:19). However, most early Christian writers continued to use Jewish scriptures side by side with texts produced by Christians. For example, several Nag Hammadi texts include retellings of the Genesis myth of creation (*Apoc. John* 19.4–33; *Nat. Rulers* 88.11–17; *Orig. World* 114.36–116.8; *Apoc. Adam* 66.14–25; *Testim. Truth* 45.21–49.15). The vagueness of the boundaries of scripture is seen in the fact that many early Christians read and used a broad variety of Jewish religious texts. Most of the texts traditionally classified in scholarship as 'pseudepigrapha' were copied, edited and transmitted by Christians (De Jonge 2003; Davila 2005).

The emergence of Christian scriptures

The beginnings of Christian literature are no longer traceable. Although scholars have assumed that New Testament letters include quotations of prayers, hymns, creeds and other liturgical materials

(e.g. 1 Cor. 15:3–5; Gal. 3:28; Phil. 2:6–11), it is hard to evaluate whether these circulated in a written or only in an oral form. In the case of the New Testament Gospels, their literary interdependence is evident, and the majority view of Marcan priority seems to be the least problematic of all proposed theories. How much Mark and the compiler of an early collection of Jesus' sayings ('Q') had written traditions of Jesus at their disposal and how much they relied on orally transmitted stories, is not easy to determine.

It is also hard to determine how and when New Testament texts became scripture for there is no documentation of the early stages. On the one hand, Matthew and Luke use Mark and Q freely, modifying and reorganizing their contents as they wish. On the other, the sheer fact that both later Gospel writers used Mark and Q independently and most probably in different geographical locations, suggests that these two earlier texts circulated widely and were publicly read (Smith 2000: 10). Each evangelist intended to write a complete account of Jesus' words and deeds – they did not think that their Gospels were just one part in a series of four (Kyrtatas 2010: 36). Matthew and Luke probably composed their Gospels to supersede Mark and Q which they found inadequate, and several scholars assume that John's Gospel shows the tendency to surpass the synoptic Gospels. All this indicates that the Gospel writers did not acknowledge the work of their peers as scripture.

The authors of New Testament letters were even less likely to think that what they produced were sacred texts. Paul certainly emphasized his authority in many of his letters and expected that his written instructions were received as authoritative. Even though he thinks highly of his own words, however, he makes a difference between them and the words of the Lord (1 Corinthians 7), the latter ranking no doubt higher than the former. Neither Paul nor any other New Testament letter or Gospel writer appeals to their own divine inspiration when composing the text. The only book where such a claim is made is the book of Revelation (Rev. 1:3, 10–11; 22:7–19; Nicklas 2010).

Both Paul's letters and the Gospels began to circulate widely early on and were soon cited as scripture. The earliest references to Paul's letters as scripture appear in the early second century. For example, 2 Peter explicitly juxtaposes Paul's letters with 'other scriptures (*graphai*)' (3:16), and 1 Clement shows that Paul's letter to the Corinthians functions as scripture to him and claims that Paul wrote it 'in spirit' (47.3). At the end of the second century, Irenaeus lists as authoritative all that which 'the prophets announced, the Lord taught, and the apostles delivered' (*Haer.* 1.8.1). However, Irenaeus and other early Christian authors also knew of texts that either they themselves or some other Christians regarded as authoritative. In the following, we survey different types of early Christian literature, some of which later became canonical and some of which were left outside.

Letters of Paul

Paul's letters (to Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Thessalonians and to Philemon) were typically addressed to guide and instruct the local congregation he had founded. Exceptions to this are the letter to the Romans, which was written to a community Paul neither found nor knew very well, and the short letter to Philemon, which is addressed to an individual slave owner. Paul's letters were occasional, that is, they dealt with specific issues in specific communities (Baynes 2010: 96–97), but especially the longer letters such as Romans or 1 Corinthians were carefully composed. The extant letters imply that Paul dictated his letters to a scribe, who wrote them down (Rom. 16:22; cf. 1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 5:11; Phlm. 19; Gamble 1995: 95–96). Composing such long letters must have taken time and was likely based on notes and drafts.

In his lifetime, Paul's teaching was not universally accepted and the letters show that he had to struggle for his authority as an apostle. Soon, however, he gained a highly esteemed reputation. An obvious sign of this is the fact that several pseudonymous letters were penned in his name, many of which ended up in the New Testament (Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians and the so-called pastoral epistles: 1–2 Timothy and Titus). Whatever their origin, most of them were universally accepted as Paul's letters; there is no trace that their authenticity was questioned in antiquity. The status of the

pastoral epistles may have been an exception as they are missing from some manuscripts. They seem to be the last ones to have been included in the expanding collection of Paul's letters, perhaps simply because they were the last ones to emerge.

Paul's letters were addressed to the whole community and they were meant to be read out loud. This was the case even for the letters to individuals; even though the letter to Philemon is written in second person singular, the greetings at the beginning and end of the letter are in plural. Paul himself probably encouraged the circulation of his letters to other Christian communities. Exchange of letters between Colossae and Laodicea is anticipated in Colossians (3:16), but this may be a fictitious trait since most scholars question Paul's authorship of this letter. Whatever Paul's own role was in the process, his letters were collected and circulated early on. Collecting letters involved editorial activity; someone had to choose what letters to include and in which order (Pervo 2010: 25–30). In the case of Paul, there were several different versions of the Pauline corpus which varied both in regard to contents and to arrangement (Gamble 1995: 58–62, 95–101).

Not all the letters Paul wrote survived. 1 Corinthians refers to a wider correspondence between Paul and the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 5:9; 7:1; 2 Cor. 2:4) and he must have written many other letters, too. It is also possible that some of the surviving letters (2 Corinthians, Philippians) are compilations from earlier ones (Pervo 2010: 38–46). If such editing of Paul's letters took place, it happened early, since there are no manuscripts containing any of the alleged earlier letters. On the other hand, the manuscript evidence shows that editors of the letter collections and copyists felt free to alter the text in several ways. One of their tendencies has to do with the problem of particularity: sometimes the information about the addressees and localities were either omitted or changed to make a letter more universal (Pervo 2010: 30–38).

Paul's letters were well received among most Christian circles. There are several references to them in second-century sources. 2 Peter and 1 Clement were already mentioned earlier. In addition, in the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*, which purportedly describes the trial of twelve Christians in North Africa in 180, one of the accused Christians carries 'books and epistles of Paul, a just man' with him. There are several allusions to Paul's letters in texts found in Nag Hammadi that stem from Valentinus and his followers, such as the *Gospel of Truth*, which may originate in the second century (Dunderberg 2015: 149–168). Marcion likewise esteemed Paul. His collection contained ten letters, excluding the pastoral epistles – perhaps because they did not exist yet (BeDuhn 2013: 203–228). Hebrews was often placed in the Pauline collection, especially in the East, even though its Pauline authorship was already doubted in antiquity (cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.11–14; Rothschild 2009). Amphilochius, the bishop of Iconium, at the end of the fourth century, refers to such doubts in writing that those who say Hebrews is spurious are 'not saying well, for the grace is genuine' (Metzger 1987: 212–213, 314). With the inclusion of Hebrews, the Pauline collection contained a total of fourteen letters, which was twice the number seven, a symbol of perfection (Pervo 2010: 37).

Even though the extent of Paul's collected letters varied, the authority of the apostle, conveyed in the letters, was not called into question. Struggles around Paul continued, but the struggle was not so much about whether to accept or dismiss his letters as about who were the rightful interpreters of them (Bird and Dodson 2011; Lehtipuu 2015: 86–94). For example, Irenaeus declares himself to represent the same truth as the apostle, while his rivals deviated from it. In his view, it was necessary to:

> [e]xplain the apostle and make clear what the heretics who have altogether misunderstood what Paul has said have interpreted differently and to show their foolish senselessness; and to demonstrate from that same Paul, from whose [writings] they press questions upon us, that they are liars and that the apostle was a preacher of the truth and that everything he taught was in accord with the proclamation of the truth.
>
> *(*Haer. *4.41.4, trans. Roberts-Rambaut)*

Paul's authority was also invoked in several other letters ascribed to him (Gregory 2015). A *Letter to the Laodiceans* was composed to provide the readers with the otherwise unknown (and possibly fictive?) letter referred to in Colossians (4:16). The letter, extant in Latin, closely resembles other Pauline letters, especially Philippians. Several early Christian sources mention the letter, but it is not certain if all of them refer to the Latin text known to us. According to Tertullian (*Marc.* 5.11.12), Marcion used the name Laodiceans for the letter to the Ephesians and he may not have been the only one. Moreover, the reference in Colossians may have inspired several writers to compose letters by that name. The *Letter to the Laodiceans* is found in some Western Latin Bibles, such as the sixth-century Codex Fuldensis where the letter is placed after Colossians (Tite 2012).

Another apocryphal letter ascribed to Paul is *3 Corinthians*. The letter circulated both as part of the *Acts of Paul* and independently. In some manuscripts, it bears a title 'Paul to the Corinthians concerning the flesh'. The letter presents itself as Paul's response to an inquiry sent to him by Corinthians. The letter takes a stance in relation to several hotly disputed tenets, such as creation, resurrection and the true humanity of Christ (Webster 2012). *3 Corinthians* is a good example of the fluidity of categories such as 'canonical' and 'apocryphal' for it belonged to the Armenian canon until the nineteenth century, placed after 1 and 2 Corinthians and before Galatians (Hovhanessian 2012).

At the end of the fourth century, Jerome mentions a correspondence between Paul and Seneca that was 'very widely read' (*Vir. ill.* 12.1.) While Jerome took these letters as authentic, their style and contents show that they are later forgeries; some of the letters are even later than others (Pervo 2010: 110–116; Ramelli 2014). Since Jerome does not cite from the letters, it is not quite clear whether the extant Latin texts correspond to those he knew. The alleged correspondence with Paul is the reason why Jerome, somewhat reluctantly, counts Seneca among his list of 'illustrious men'. Neither Jerome nor any other source makes a claim that these letters of Paul should be acknowledged as scripture.

Gospels

Very little is known about the origins and early circulation of the New Testament Gospels. We do not even have secured answers to very basic questions such as who wrote them, where and to whom. All we can say is that they apparently circulated widely and were highly esteemed from the beginning. This early evidence includes juxtaposing Gospels with the law and the prophets (Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 5.1), introducing a Gospel passage with the scriptural formula 'it is written' (Barn. 4.14 with reference to Matt. 22:14) and calling a Gospel passage 'scripture' (*graphē*; 2 Clem. 2.4).

It is evident that the New Testament Gospels were partly based on earlier written materials. Memories related to Jesus circulated orally but were also grouped together in smaller collections in writing (Schröter 2013: 84–88). Written sources have been postulated even behind the earliest Gospel, that of Mark, and both the preface to Luke's Gospel and the closing of John's Gospel attest to the existence of several early accounts of Jesus' words and deeds (Luke 1:1–4; John 21:25). It was particularly the words of Jesus to which early Christ-followers accorded special authority (Puig i Tàrrech 2016). The earliest reminiscences of Jesus' teaching are found in the letters of Paul, written before the composition of the Gospels. Sometimes, albeit rather infrequently, Paul quotes 'the word of the Lord' (e.g. 1 Cor. 7:10–11; 9:14; 11:23–25), which probably refers to Paul's received tradition. Another source for receiving the Lord's words, however, was direct revelation in prayer or ecstasy (cf. 2 Cor. 12:3–4, 8–9).

Several second-century texts also reflect how Jesus' sayings were used as authority in instruction and polemic. While many of these references resemble passages in the New Testament Gospels, it is not always possible to say whether authors who quoted them knew them as part of a written text or whether they were relying on oral tradition (see, e.g. *1 Clem.* 3.1–2; 46.8; *Did.* 8.2; Ptolemy, *Flor.* 3.5–8). These early references also show that Jesus' words began to function as scripture early on (McDonald 2007: 271–273) – perhaps already before they were written down. Interestingly,

second- and third-century authors sometimes quote Jesus' words that do not appear in the New Testament Gospels (e.g. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.33.3–4; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 5.10.63; Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 13.2; cf. Acts 20:35). These *agrapha*, sayings ascribed to Jesus that do not appear in the New Testament Gospels, are sometimes identified as part of a Gospel, but some of them might have been known in oral form only (Frey 2015: 18–19).

The Gospels were composed as authoritative guides for Christian communities to be read aloud alongside Jewish scriptures. In this regard they were well received. The earliest reference to such practice is offered by Justin Martyr at around the middle of the second century, that is, only about half a century after the completion of the New Testament Gospels. Justin talks about reading the 'memoirs of the apostles' and the writings of the prophets in Sunday gatherings (*1 Apol.* 67.3). However, not all churches accepted all Gospels. For a long time, several communities preferred to use one Gospel only (Kyrtatas 2010: 36–37). The most popular seems to have been the Gospel of Matthew, but Marcion notoriously only accepted his own version of the Gospel of Luke, whereas in Syria priority was given to Tatian's *Diatessaron*, a harmonization of the four Gospels. Moreover, some anti-Montanist writers were reserved towards the Gospel of John or even rejected it because it gave a scriptural basis for the Montanist teaching of the Paraclete (Metzger 1987: 104–105, 150), and some early Christians were skeptical about the attribution of this Gospel to the apostle John.

The first author to clearly refer to a fourfold Gospel tradition is Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons at the end of the second century. In a polemical passage he argues that there must be four Gospels, not more nor less as 'heretics' claim, just as there are four winds and four zones of the world (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.11.8). Irenaeus also links the four Gospels with the four living creatures in the book of Revelation (Rev. 4:7), which had a lasting impact on Christian art. Some scholars assume that the number of accepted Gospels was still debated and take Irenaeus' argumentation as an innovation, while others see it as defence of a traditional position against those who want to either widen or narrow the number of recognized Gospels (Gamble 2002: 280). Be that as it may, it is clear that the fourfold Gospel became established in the second century. Other authors who bear witness to a collection of the four Gospels include Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 3.93.1) and Origen (*Hom. Luc.* 1.2). Moreover, the earliest manuscript containing all four Gospels and the book of Acts (P^{45}) goes back to the first half of the third century, and Tatian's Gospel harmony, composed in the latter half of the second century, also presupposes a fourfold Gospel tradition (Balla 2002: 379).

The four New Testament Gospels by no means exhaust the number of early Christian Gospels (Schröter 2016). Several other Gospels are known either through references to them in patristic sources or through manuscript finds. Despite some attempts to give an approximate number of extracanonical Gospels (Baynes 2010: 94 referring to Charles Hedrick), any estimate remains conjectural, for several reasons. First, it is possible that several Gospels circulated under the same name. Thus, it is not clear whether the *Gospel of Judas* and the *Gospel of Truth*, to which Irenaeus refers (*Haer.* 1.31.1; 3.11.9), were the same texts as those now extant in Codex Tchacos and Nag Hammadi Codex I. The only quotation of the *Gospel of Philip* in Epiphanius (*Pan.* 6.13.2–3) does not belong to the Coptic *Gospel of Philip* (NHC II,3; Hartenstein 2009). Second, sometimes the references may be confused or there are other reasons to doubt the existence of a particular Gospel. For example, it is uncertain whether the *Gospel of the Hebrews* and the *Gospel of the Nazarenes*, traditionally counted as separate Jewish-Christian works, were distinct from each other (Luomanen 2012: 83–144). A hotly debated text is the so-called *Secret Gospel of Mark*, which some scholars consider a modern forgery (Burke 2013). Third, it is not always easy to define which texts should be counted as Gospels. The title 'Gospel' was given to a variety of texts, many of which do not resemble the New Testament Gospels at all. For example, the *Gospel of Mary* recounts a dialogue with the risen Christ and Mary (who is most likely to be identified with Mary Magdalene; King 2003: 148), but most texts of the same genre do not bear a name of a Gospel (such as *Epistula Apostolorum*, the *Dialogue of the Saviour*, the *Apocalypse of James*, the *Book of Thomas*, the *Apocryphon of John* and many others; Frey 2015: 35–37).

Ancient Gospels can be classified in different ways (Miller 2010; Ehrman and Pleše 2014; Frey 2015). One is to group them according to how they have survived: (1) Gospels that are known only through references or quotations in ancient sources (in addition to Jewish-Christian Gospels these include, e.g. the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, which is quoted – and rejected – by Clement of Alexandria and also mentioned by some other early Christian writers); (2) Gospel fragments (such as the Egerton gospel, which consists of fragments of papyrus codex of an otherwise unknown gospel); and (3) Gospel manuscripts. Most of the texts in the last category have also survived only partially, but in contrast to the second group these are texts that can be identified.

Another way of grouping the Gospels is according to genre. Typically, three different Gospel types have been identified: narrative Gospels, sayings Gospels and dialogue Gospels. The more fragmentary a text is, the more difficult it is to classify it into any of these types. Apart from different infancy Gospels, which comprise stories about Jesus' birth and childhood (on these, see Chapter 37 in this work), and the relatively late *Gospel of Nicodemus* (also known as *Acts of Pilate*), which describes Christ's 'harrowing of hell' between his death and resurrection, not many texts stand close to the category of narrative Gospels and very few, if any, of them narrate more than just one phase of Jesus' life. The surviving part of the *Gospel of Peter* only includes the passion narrative, but may have included other sections too (Foster 2010; Henderson 2011).

More typically, several Gospels focus on Jesus' teaching. Perhaps the most significant of them all is the *Gospel of Thomas*, not least because of its good claim for antiquity. The text is known partially in Greek (three papyrus fragments found at Oxyrhynchus) and almost completely in Coptic (Nag Hammadi Codex II,2). It is a collection of 114 sayings of Jesus, usually introduced by a simple formula 'Jesus said' but sometimes containing a short dialogue between Jesus and his disciples. Some of the sayings have a close parallel in the synoptic material, but others differ significantly from anything Jesus says in the canonical Gospels. Scholars have both considered Thomas to be earlier than the synoptic Gospels, introducing a more 'authentic' Jesus (Patterson 2014), and deemed it a later text, dependent on the synoptic tradition (Gathercole 2012; Goodacre 2012), but independent of John's Gospel (Dunderberg 2006). Despite its name, the *Gospel of Philip* (NHC II,3) provides neither a story about Jesus nor a collection of his sayings; it is rather a collection of early Christian teachings, probably derived from various sources (Turner 1997; Heimola 2011: 28–34).

The dialogue Gospels focus on Jesus' conversation with one or more of his disciples. While this type of Gospel usually does not contain narratives about Jesus' miracles or other deeds, it often provides more context to Jesus' teaching than the sayings Gospels. Typically, the dialogue is set to post-Easter time and occurs between the risen Jesus and his disciple(s) who receives a special revelation not intended for everyone. The newly discovered *Gospel of Judas* is also a dialogue Gospel, even though the events described in it take place shortly before Jesus' death. Judas, the receiver of Jesus' message, is set apart from the other disciples – a feature the text has in common with the New Testament Gospels. What is different from the New Testament Gospels is that Judas fares better than the other, totally ignorant disciples. Scholarly opinion is divided over whether Judas is seen as a positive figure or whether he is evaluated negatively after all (Scopello 2008; DeConick 2009).

Other texts: acts and letters of the apostles, apocalypses

There is very little ancient evidence about the early transmission and circulation of the Acts of the Apostles. Acts is recognized as a sequel to Luke's Gospel in several early sources (the Muratorian fragment; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.14) but the two never appear one after the other in manuscripts or in canon lists. This indicates that they were perceived as two distinct works early on (cf. Acts 1:1) and that they were not copied together (Gregory 2003). It may also imply that the fourfold Gospel tradition was established early. Even though the sequence of the four Gospels

vary in different manuscripts – the order Matthew, John, Luke, Mark was popular especially in the west – there is only one known source where Luke's Gospel is placed as the last one of the four Gospels (the so-called Mommsen catalogue; McDonald 2007: 387) and even here it is not followed by Acts.

Despite its name, the Acts of the Apostles offers very little information on most of the apostles – especially if 'apostles' are taken in the Lukan sense to denote the twelve disciples only. This shortage of information may be one of the reasons for the appearance of several works on the deeds and often also on the deaths of various apostles (Klauck 2008; Pervo 2015). Five major apocryphal acts of apostles, describing the adventures of Peter, Paul, John, Andrew and Thomas respectively, are generally dated to the second and third centuries and also other acts are known (e.g. *Acts of Philip*, *Acts of Bartholomew*, or *Acts of Xantippe, Polyxena and Rebecca*). Even though these narratives are similar to Hellenistic novels and could thus be treated as imaginative literature (see Chapter 37 in this work), there is evidence that they were taken seriously among early Christians. For example, Hippolytus of Rome refers to Paul's encounter with a lion, reminiscent of a scene in the *Acts of Paul* (*Comm. Dan.* 3.29), Tertullian reproves women who teach and baptize according to the example of Thecla (*Bapt.* 17.4–5) and many of the accounts, particularly of the apostles' deaths as martyrs, were used in liturgical commemoration all through the Middle Ages (Rose 2009: 23–78).

The canonical book of Acts is often linked in manuscripts with the so-called catholic letters – pseudonymous writings ascribed to Peter, James, John and Jude (Grünstäudel 2016). Despite being called epistles, they are rather theological expositions than actual letters. The designation 'catholic' or 'general' denotes that they are 'universal' in the sense that they do not have specific communities or individuals as their addressees like the Pauline letters have. Exceptions to this rule are 2 and 3 John, the first of which is addressed to the 'elect lady' (perhaps meaning the church itself?) and the latter to a certain Gaius. The epistles were already called 'catholic' by Eusebius in the fourth century (*Hist. eccl.* 2.23.25) who knew seven of them, presumably the seven later included in the New Testament canon. Eusebius also relates that the letters of James and Jude were disputed because 'few of the ancients quote them', and reports Origen's uncertainty about the two short epistles attributed to John (*Hist. eccl.* 6.25.10). Jude was known and used by the author of 2 Peter but otherwise it is rarely cited, as is also the case with most of the other catholic letters, too, apart from 1 John and 1 Peter. The latter two are frequently mentioned in early lists of accepted texts, while the other letters appear only occasionally in them. While it is no coincidence that the letters eventually numbered seven, the collection was not fixed early, and this means that the extent of the canon remained unclear for a long time (Gamble 2002: 287–288). As we have seen, the great codices of the fourth and fifth centuries contain a greater number of letters, *Barnabas* in Sinaiticus and *1–2 Clement* in Alexandrinus. These, however, are placed after Revelation and not as part of the catholic letter collection. These and other early letters, such as the epistles of Ignatius, show that the letter format was a popular way of conveying early Christian teaching. Some examples are also found among Nag Hammadi texts, such as the *Treatise on the Resurrection* (also called *Letter to Rheginos*, NHC I,4) and the *Letter of Peter to Philip* (NHC VIII,2).

Early Christians also produced apocalyptic literature. This genre was popular both among Jews and Christians and any borderline between apocalyptic texts of Jewish provenance on the one hand and Christian on the other is artificial (Bauckham 2015). Christians cherished and transmitted many Jewish apocalypses, for example, the originally Jewish *Fourth Ezra* is best known (with Christian additions) as *2 Esdras* in an appendix of the Vulgate New Testament (where it was called *4 Esdras*; Knibb 2008: 173). The Revelation of John seems to have enjoyed wide popularity at first, especially among chiliasts (such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and Tertullian) – but later it became disputed expressly for its millenarian ideas and its popularity among Montanists (Metzger 1987: 104–105). In a letter from around the middle of the third century preserved by Eusebius, Dionysius, the bishop of Alexandria, tells that some claimed Revelation was written by Cerinthus to promote the belief in the earthly reign of Christ and hence rejected it. For his part, Dionysius writes:

> But I could not venture to reject the book, as many brethren hold it in high esteem. But I suppose that it is beyond my comprehension, and that there is a certain concealed and more wonderful meaning in every part. For if I do not understand I suspect that a deeper sense lies beneath the words.
>
> *(Eusebius,* Hist. eccl. 7.*25.2–4)*

Other popular apocalypses included the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Shepherd of Hermas*. Both are mentioned in the Muratorian fragment whose composer accepts the *Apocalypse of Peter* along with the Apocalypse of John but admits that not all allow its reading publicly. The list also treats the *Shepherd* approvingly but wants to limit its use to private settings because it has been written recently and, hence, does not belong to the authoritative texts of the apostolic age. However, the manuscript tradition shows an opposite tendency: there are no examples where the *Apocalypse of Peter* is copied together with other New Testament texts, while the *Shepherd* belongs to the New Testament canon of Codex Sinaiticus. Moreover, Irenaeus treats the *Shepherd* as scripture, quoting it with an introduction 'well said the scripture' (*Haer.* 4.20.2; cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.8.7) and Clement of Alexandria holds it in high esteem (Batovici 2013). Only in the fourth century do writers such as Eusebius and Athanasius show more ambivalence towards it, perhaps because it had become too popular with groups that those in power wanted to exclude (Nielsen 2012: 166).

Who read and used early Christian scriptures?

Scripture is not only about texts, it is very much about people and communities who grant the authoritative status of scripture to certain texts (Brakke 1994: 417; Brooke 2005: 99). Even though literacy was thinly spread in antiquity, acquaintance with scriptures was much wider, for texts were normally read out aloud (Gamble 1995: 2–10) and scriptures enjoyed a central place in community gatherings early on. On the other hand, the role and function of scripture in ancient Jewish and Christian communities should not be overemphasized. The primarily oral culture of late antiquity differed from the bookish, academic culture of present-day scholars, which tends to give texts a constitutive role for identity formation. It is likely that other factors, such as rituals, homilies and sacred spaces were at least as important in the life of early Christians (Stern 2012: 15–30; Nicklas 2016).

Liturgical setting was crucial for the selection of scripture; in several fourth-century sources, a distinction is made between texts that are acceptable for public reading and other texts, some of which are approved for other than public use and some of which are rejected. Which texts belonged to which group, varied. Eusebius, for example, reports different opinions concerning Revelation (*Hist. eccl.* 3.25.2, 4) and lists disputed writings that 'are read publicly by many in most churches' (3.31.6). He also tells about the intriguing case of the *Gospel of Peter* and its fate in the Christian community of Rhossus at the turn of the third century. According to a letter of Serapion, the bishop of Antioch, he first approved of the reading of the *Gospel of Peter*, a text previously unknown to him. Later, however, he learned that some community members had come to entertain ideas which he deemed heretical. This prompted him to familiarize himself with the text after which he denounced it for containing false teachings and being falsely ascribed to Peter and rejected it (*Hist. eccl.* 6.12.3–6).

Public reading in a liturgical setting was not the only context where scriptures were read. Texts were also used for private edification, sometimes also for entertainment (Gamble 1995: 231–237; Bovon 2015). Private reading took many forms. For example, in addition to approved canonized (*kanonizomena*) and dismissed apocryphal texts (*apokrypha*), Athanasius of Alexandria also lists other books which are not included in the canon but which one can – and should – read. These texts include the Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Esther, Judith, Tobit, the *Didache*, and the *Shepherd of Hermas*, which Athanasius recommends particularly for cathecumens (*Ep. fest.* 39). In all likelihood, this kind of 'private' reading still took place in ecclesiastical communities. On the other hand, homilies and theological treatises contain exhortations to read scriptures at home, which reveals that

the addressees were the literate elite, few in number. Another important context for reading and interpreting scriptures was formed by study circles or schools gathered around a teacher figure, such as Justin Martyr and Valentinus in Rome, and Clement and Origen in Alexandria. It is likely that these intellectual Christians were not particularly eager to delineate scripture closely, 'for one who knows how to search properly may find the truth in almost any document' (Brakke 2012: 403).

Naturally, at least some of the texts that authors such as Eusebius or Athanasius rejected as apocryphal and heretical were also written for a readership. Who read these texts and did they regard them as scripture? Judging by the hostile reports of some patristic writers, we can conclude that these texts were deemed authoritative by their readers. For example, Tertullian disapproves of women who follow 'the example of Thecla' (*Bapt*. 17.4–5), which indicates that these women knew the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* and, unlike Tertullian, highly esteemed it. Clement of Alexandria polemicizes against Julius Cassianus and other ascetic teachers who used the *Gospel of the Egyptians* to justify their encratite views (*Strom*. 3.9.63–66; 3.13.91–93). What remains unclear, however, is what other texts Cassianus and others read besides the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. Was this Gospel meant to complement or to replace other texts, such as the canonical Gospels (cf. Hurtado 2015)? The question related to the possible readership of such texts is virtually impossible to answer since most of these rejected texts now stand so completely out of context. Most of them are known only through one or very few manuscripts in later translations. We do not know who produced them and to whom, or how they were used and transmitted. Sometimes it is not even certain where the manuscript was found.

Interestingly, some texts are explicitly entitled apocrypha, that is, 'secret books' (e.g. the *Apocryphon of John*; the *Apocryphon of James*). Others open with an emphasis on secrecy: 'These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke' (*Gospel of Thomas*) or 'The secret account of the revelation that Jesus spoke in conversation with Judas Iscariot' (*Gospel of Judas*). This evokes an impression that such texts were not meant for public reading, but were intended for those who were more advanced in their faith. Such a scenario does not have to imply esoteric, secretive communities but a basic division between newcomers and those who have progressed further in faith and learning. A fascinating point of comparison is offered by Athanasius who recommends non-canonized texts expressly for newcomers.

Texts were also used as ritual artefacts (Uro 2013). The notion of holiness in relation to scripture gave rise to the magical use of scriptural texts (Bremmer 2010: 352). More than twenty late antique amulets written on papyrus or parchment with excerpts of New Testament texts have been found (Jones 2016). In addition, amulets were written on wooden tablets and ostraca. They may have had ritual functions in invoking the divine for healing or other favours, or they may have been worn for protection, or both.

Concluding remarks: canon formation as part of inter-Christian polemics

Our discussion has shown that the question of what constituted scripture in early Christianity is broader than tracing the development of the canon of the Christian Bible. Even though the scriptural status of certain central compositions (e.g. Torah and the prophets, Paul's letters) is an early phenomenon, the explicit canonization of scripture happened much later. Several catalogues listing recognized (*homologoumena*) or canonized (*kanonizomena*, *endiathēka*) texts appear in the fourth century (Hahnemann 2002: 412–415; McDonald 2007: 445–450). These lists show simultaneously a wide agreement and considerable variation: while most of the texts listed are the same, none of the earliest lists are exactly identical. Determining what texts should be regarded as authoritative and rejecting others was closely linked with struggles over what constituted true Christianity. Several of the lists contain explicit polemics against groups that were deemed heretical. Thus, the Muratorian fragment (which some scholars date to the end of the second century, while others argue for a fourth-century date; cf. Hahnemann 2002; Verheyden 2003) is aimed 'against Marcion's heresy', and Eusebius and Athanasius wish to distance themselves from 'the inventions of heretics' (*Hist. eccl*. 3.25.7; *Ep. fest*. 39).

It is customary to speak about criteria of canonicity according to which texts were either accepted or rejected. Such parlance easily entails a false impression as if a council or a committee scrutinized each text and decided its status. In reality, most of the texts that became included in the canon already enjoyed a scriptural status when debates over the inclusion and exclusion of texts intensified in the fourth century. Different authors appealed to different criteria, such as apostolicity, antiquity and catholicity, but all of these were far from absolute. A text's claim to apostolicity did not suffice; for example, the *Gospel of Thomas*, supposedly written down by the disciple Didymos Judas Thomas (*Gos. Thom.* 1), was not accepted, and charges of forgery were made against several texts that went under the name of an apostle. On the other hand, texts written by alleged companions of apostles (Mark, Luke) were included, as well as others of unclear authorship (Hebrews). Similarly, while antiquity was taken as a guarantee of apostolic origin, it is clear that some texts included in the canon (2 Peter) are later than some that were excluded (1 Clement). The criterion of catholicity was also flexible, as the variety in the lists of canonical books shows (McDonald 2007: 433). There is very little evidence of any wide use of texts such as Philemon, 2 Peter, Jude, 2 and 3 John – both in antiquity and in the present (Nielsen 2012: 164–165). It seems, then, that what mattered in the end was whether a text was considered to represent orthodoxy – and here opinion was sometimes divided. Moreover, 'orthodoxy' was not a monolith but included an array of ideas, as the different emphases of accepted texts show (Baynes 2010: 93). In many cases, discussions about the limits of the canon were reactions to already existing situations, and their main purpose was to restrict the use of texts deemed inappropriate (Schröter 2013: 335).

The discussion about the exclusion and inclusion of texts in the canon almost exclusively concerned New Testament texts. The Christian Old Testament consisted of the available Greek translations of Jewish scriptures. The Torah was translated into Greek as early as the third century BCE, further emphasizing its early importance, other compositions only gradually during the following centuries. Rabbinic Judaism abandoned the Greek translation in the second century CE whereas Christians continued to use it as their scripture (Aejmelaeus 2012).

The role of the community was essential in the canonical process. Texts, whatever claims they make, need people to authorize and canonize them. And although 'canon' as a social construct can gain elevated status and thus legitimacy, its actual power to influence communities is pragmatic and tested in practice. The interrelatedness of authority, legitimacy and power is reflected in the problem of 'canon inside the canon', where, after the closure of the canon, certain texts end up having more actual power and importance than others. It seems that inside the canonical collection the actual authoritative status of a text can change over time, although its legitimacy as a canonized text remains the same. Another important factor has to do with interpreting texts: both before and after the closure of the canon, the interpretation often ends up having more actual power than the 'authoritative' source text as such.

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25
SAINTS AND HAGIOGRAPHY

Mark Humphries

Saints and society in Christian late antiquity

At the very beginning of the fifth century CE, the Spanish poet Aurelius Prudentius Clemens (348–*c.* 405) composed his *Peristephanon* (*The Crowns of Martyrdom*), a set of sophisticated literary hymns praising a variety of martyrs (Palmer 1989; Roberts 1993). The work is very instructive both of the developing cult of saints in the Christian Roman empire and of the ways in which the stories of these saints were told and retold. Among the most famous of Prudentius' martyr stories is his account of the third-century Roman saint Laurence, who was roasted alive on a gridiron and taunted his tormentors to check if he was properly cooked (*Peristephanon* 2.406–8) (see Figure 25.1). The tale of Laurence's death was plainly popular, since not only is it reflected in Prudentius' poetic version, but is also probably depicted in a mosaic which shows Laurence beside his gridiron in the small chapel erroneously known as the 'mausoleum of Galla Placidia' at Ravenna in northern Italy (Deliyannis 2010: 78–9; Grig 2004: 136–41). The presence of a Roman martyr in a work by a Spanish poet indicates that some saints were being celebrated far beyond their original homes. Prudentius was particularly interested in Roman saints and mentions others, including the

Figure 25.1 Mosaic depicting St Laurence and his gridiron from the fifth-century chapel known as the 'mausoleum of Galla Placidia', Ravenna. Photo Wikicommons

apostles Peter and Paul (*Peristephanon* 12) and the girl martyr Agnes (*Peristephanon* 14).[1] In fact, Prudentius's vision stretches further to include martyrs such as the African Cyprian of Carthage (*Peristephanon* 13), the north-Italian Cassian of Imola (*Peristephanon* 9), and the Danubian Quirinus of Siscia (*Peristephanon* 7).

But one of the most interesting aspects of the *Peristephanon* is the light it sheds on a string of Spanish martyrs, for whom Prudentius is often our earliest source. Some of these became quite celebrated, like the headstrong virgin Eulalia of Merida (*Peristephanon* 3), whose martyrdom is the subject of a famous painting by the English Pre-Raphaelite John William Waterhouse. But the majority are shrouded in local obscurity, like Emeterius and Chelidonius, martyrs of Calagurris (modern Calahorra) (*Peristephanon* 1), or the eighteen martyrs of Caesaraugusta (Zaragoza) (*Peristephanon* 4). Prudentius seems to have been particularly keen on Emeterius and Chelidonius: not only does his hymn praising them come first in the *Peristephanon*, but also a later poem in the collection describes a baptistery built on the site where they had been martyred (*Peristephanon* 8). About the martyrs themselves, Prudentius reports that they had been soldiers who renounced their careers for their faith and who could not be persuaded to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods during an episode of persecution. They were immediately subjected to tortures, but held firm and died for their faith. Prudentius' account is often sketchy, and with good reason – for, as he reports:

> We are denied the facts about these matters, the very tradition is destroyed, for long ago a reviling soldier of the guard took away the records, lest generations taught by documents that held the memory fast should make public the details, the time and manner of their martyrdom, and spread them abroad in sweet speech for posterity to hear.
>
> *(Prudentius,* Peristephanon *1.74–8; Thomson 1949–53 trans., 2.105)*

In Prudentius' view, however, the destruction of authentic court records of Emeterius and Chelidonius' trial meant only the loss of trivial details, such as how long the martyrs' hair grew during their imprisonment; altogether more important truths had been preserved by memory, and, more importantly, were re-enacted in the miracles that daily took place at the saints' shrine (Grig 2004: 74–5). In other words, the absence of precise historical data relating to Emeterius and Chelidonius was no obstacle to their cult – or, indeed, to Prudentius writing his own 'sweet speech' about their martyrdom.

Prudentius' account chimes in harmony with other evidence for the developing cult of saints between the second and fifth centuries. This chapter will explore various manifestations of the cult, particularly the writing of hagiographical accounts of saints' sufferings and achievements. It will begin by outlining the basic categories of saints venerated in the early Christian period, before examining how such saints were recorded in hagiography. Neither the cult of saints nor hagiography traditionally have enjoyed much esteem among rationally minded historians. To Edward Gibbon (1737–94), that great son of Enlightenment reason, the cult of saints represented the worst excesses of medieval superstition. He wrote in his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*:

> In the long period of twelve hundred years which elapsed between the reign of Constantine and the reformation of Luther, the worship of saints and relics corrupted the pure and perfect simplicity of the Christian model: and some symptoms of degeneracy may be observed even in the first generations which adopted and cherished this pernicious innovation.
>
> *(Gibbon 1994 [1781]: 94 [= ch. 28, part 3])*

Hagiography has fared little better, often being regarded as little more than a whimsical devotional literature that served to instruct the docile faithful in tales of the heroic age of the church. It is only in the last century, particularly with the work of scholars like Hippolyte Delehaye (1859–1941) and Peter Brown (born 1935), that the texts have been subjected to a more critical approach.

Even so, the insistence of some scholars in dividing hagiographical texts into the categories of 'authentic' and 'fictional' (e.g. Barnes 2010) is less than helpful. While such a distinction is understandable, it obfuscates the reality that many (perhaps most) hagiographical texts, however much they sought to present a record of historical events, were shaped by the literary milieu and ambitions of their authors. More than that, as we will see, hagiography sought to articulate intimate connections between dead saints and later generations of Christians. In short, this is a sophisticated literature deserving of serious appraisal.

From martyrs to ascetics

The founding myths of Christianity emphasise the sacrifice of Christ for the salvation of humankind though the Crucifixion and Resurrection. Implicit in that story is a particular set of views about the relationship between the material and immaterial world, and specifically that earthly existence is but a prelude to an eternal hereafter. As a consequence, what mattered most was the soul, with the body acting only as a vessel for it during its terrestrial journey. But this did not mean that the body was unimportant: on the contrary, excessive indulgence of physical desires and appetites could seriously jeopardise the soul's progress to eternity. The apostle Paul had already spoken of a conflict in his body between spirit and flesh, of which the only hopeful outcome was deliverance 'from this body of death' (Rom. 7:18–24). Viewed in these terms, the body could, like Christ's body, be subjected to torment so long as the purity of the soul was preserved intact. Furthermore, bodily torments could achieve greater perfection for the soul, because 'the [Holy] Spirit might grant the human body the supreme gift of endurance in the face of death' (Brown 1988: 82). This can be seen as central to the two major models of sainthood that emerged in the early Christian centuries: the martyr and the ascetic.

Emerging Christianity's earliest heroes were the martyrs, those who bore witness (the very name martyr is derived from *martys*, 'witness' in Greek) to Christian truth and salvation by willingly subjecting themselves to pain, torment and death. In so doing, the martyrs vividly re-enacted Christ's sufferings on the cross and in turn could inspire other Christians to remain steadfast in their faith when facing persecution. Thus one of the earliest accounts of a martyrdom, that of Polycarp of Smyrna in the mid second century,[2] recounts how the martyr calmly awaited his fate 'just as the Lord did' so 'that we might become his imitators' (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 1; Musurillo 1972 trans., 3). In a powerful demonstration of Paul's teaching that there was no distinction between male and female in Jesus Christ (*Galatians* 3:28), such performances were by no means solely a male preserve: when the girl Blandina was martyred at Lyons in 177/8, her brethren gazed upon her hanging from the gibbet 'in the shape of a cross . . . and with their outward eyes saw in the form of their sister Him who was crucified for them' (Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.1.41; Lake 1926 trans., 427). These actions exemplified the ability of Christians to prevail even when living amid a society that was hostile to them and which periodically unleashed persecution against them. A vivid explanation of the meaning of such sufferings is offered by the African Christian Tertullian, who had seen the horrors of persecution with his own eyes:

> Torture us, rack us, condemn us, crush us; your cruelty only proves our innocence. That is why God suffers us to suffer all this . . . But nothing whatever is accomplished by your cruelties, each more exquisite than the last. It is the bait that wins men for our school. We multiply whenever we are mown down by you; the blood of Christians is seed.
>
> *(Tertullian,* Apologeticus *50.12–13)*

Such views help to explain how the sufferings of martyrs became emblematic of the history of Christianity under the pagan emperors. For Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 339), the experience of martyrdom was one of the four chief themes in his foundational narrative of church from Christ

to Constantine, alongside the succession of bishops, the preservation of orthodox faith and the misfortunes experienced by the Jews because of their rejection of Jesus as Messiah (*H.E.* 1.1.1–3). Towards the end of the fourth century, the monk Jerome (347–420) too planned to write a history of the church; although he never realised this ambition, some sense of what he intended can be gleaned from remarks in his hagiography of the Syrian hermit Malchus:

> I have decided to write an account of the Church of Christ from the coming of the Saviour down to our own time, in other words from the apostle down to the dregs of our own period, showing by what means and through what agents the Church was born, and how it grew up under the persecutions and was crowned by the martyrs, and how, under the Christian emperors, it became more powerful and wealthy but less rich in virtues.
>
> *(Jerome,* Life of Malchus *1; White 1998 trans., 121)*

Once more we can see how the experience of the martyrs epitomised an aspirational, virtuous age in the church's history.

A ready supply of heroic martyrs relied, of course, on a hostile state, so the conversion of Constantine to Christianity and the development of the Christian Roman empire in the fourth and fifth centuries presented a challenge to Christian notions of sainthood and spurred a quest for a new focus of Christian heroism. It is about this time that we get a shift in emphasis from martyrs to ascetics, both those who lived solitary lives remote from society as hermits and those who engaged in communal living, such as monks and, later, nuns (Brown 1971, 1988: 213–58). Just as the martyrs signalled their rejection of conventional understandings of the relationship between body and society by undergoing tortures and execution, so ascetics advertised their disdain for the material world by enduring extreme privations of anything that could be construed as bodily comfort (ranging from sex to food to soft clothing, furniture or washing). Their achievement of holiness through such acts was advertised by the performance of miracles: many holy men and women were credited with working wonders such as healing or prophecy or the divinely inspired destruction of pagan temples.

The reputations of such holy men and women spread rapidly. Just as the sufferings of martyrs provided exemplars for other Christians who might at any moment experience the rigours of persecution, so too ascetics provided models that could inspire other Christians to similar acts of holy privation. Augustine of Hippo (354–430) records such an instance in his spiritual autobiography, the *Confessions*. At a period in his life when Augustine was experiencing profound spiritual doubt – when, famously, he prayed to God for 'chastity and continence, but not yet' (*Confessions* 8.7.17) – he records how stories of the famous monk (and prototypical ascetic saint) Anthony of Egypt (251–356; see Chapter 51 of this volume) galvanised him to persevere with his religious struggle. The impetus came from his friend Ponticianus, who related a story of imperial officials at Trier who came across a copy of the *Life of Anthony*. One of them 'was amazed and set on fire, and during his reading began to think of taking up this [ascetic] life and leaving his secular post in the civil service to be [God's] servant' (*Confessions* 8.6.15; Chadwick 1991 trans., 143). In turn, Ponticianus' retelling of the story was to be important in nudging Augustine towards his spiritual goal (*Confessions* 8.12.29). Certainly, the *Life of Anthony* circulated widely in a variety of versions: in Egypt it was found in Coptic and Greek (although the precise relationship between these versions of the *Life*, particularly in terms of which came first, is a vexed issue: Barnes 1986; Louth 1988). It was translated into Latin twice by the end of the fourth century, thereby influencing westerners like Augustine. The translations of the lives of numerous saints into languages other than those of their original composition (which includes not only Latin and Greek, but also a range of eastern languages such as Coptic, Syriac and Armenian) became something of a growth industry, as accounts of an astonishing array of ascetic saints from monks and hermits to converted prostitutes were disseminated across the Mediterranean world and the Near East.

In later years, Augustine became bishop of Hippo Regius in Numidia. A hallmark of his episcopate was that he adopted an ascetic lifestyle, and for like-minded members of his community,

he provided a monastic rule (Lawless 1987). This reflects a wider trend in the Christian empire in the later fourth and fifth centuries that saw church leaders expected to adhere to ascetic modes of behaviour (Rapp 2005: 296–7). An important model in the west for this combination of the ascetic and bishop was provided by Martin of Tours (d. 397): according to the *Life of Martin* (ch. 9) written by his disciple Sulpicius Severus, it was precisely his reputation as a miracle-working ascetic that attracted the Christians of the Gallic city of Tours when they sought a new bishop. Once in office, Martin maintained his ascetic lifestyle and established a monastery outside Tours: from there his reputation spread, attracting his hagiographer Sulpicius Severus to visit him and adopt the ascetic lifestyle (*Life of Martin* 25; Stancliffe 1983: 10–19). In the impulse towards selecting bishops who were ascetic masters, we can detect anxieties about the virtue of church leadership at precisely that time when Jerome, in his hagiography of Malchus, expressed concerns about the fortunes of Christianity in the Christian empire. Yet while some bishops, like Ambrose of Milan, were successful in securing the appointment of their associates to neighbouring sees, Martin was not: it seems as if, at first, his brand of ascetic bishop was too exotic for his fellow churchmen in Gaul (Stancliffe 1983: 341–62).

It should be noted also that the success of ascetic sainthood depended in no small measure on its endless adaptability. The practice of asceticism had begun in the deserts of Egypt and in the arid limestone massif above Antioch in Syria, but this did not prevent it from spreading into regions where deserts were, in the strict sense, hard to find. Thus in western Europe, ascetics sought to recreate the removal from society that had been characteristic of their Egyptian and Syrian models in a variety of marginal locations. They might choose islands such as Lérins, lying off the French Riviera, chosen by the monk Honoratus for his monastery; hitherto it had been 'uninhabited because of its utter desolation and unvisited for fear of its venomous snakes' (Hilary of Arles, *Sermon on the Life of Honoratus* 3.15; Hoare 1954 trans., 259). Mountains like the Jura in Gaul, the Alps and the Italian Apennines provided similarly remote locales in which ascetics could devote their lives to God.[3] That this was possible reflects how 'the desert' was as much a symbolic location as an actual one. Western views are neatly encapsulated in a work by Eucherius of Lyons in the mid fifth century: having reviewed various instances of the desert as a place where monks, following the model of biblical figures like Moses, Elijah or Christ could commune with God, he reserves special praise of Lérins as the epitome of the desert lifestyle (Vivian *et al.* 1999: 197–215).

But more than that, ascetics could live cheek by jowl with settled society, in monasteries or convents on the margins or even within urban centres. These were found dispersed throughout the Roman world by the fifth century, but with clusters in particular places such as the Egyptian and Syrian deserts where they had been so long established that it seemed, in a luminous phrase of Athanasius, 'the desert was made a city by monks' (*Life of Anthony* 14, trans. Chitty 1966: 5). There came to be concentrations too in places like the Holy Land, particularly at Jerusalem, where ascetic communities could provide both guides and places to stay for pilgrims visiting the holy places (Chitty 1966: 46–64). In a reflexive turn, the monasteries and abodes of hermits themselves became the focus of pilgrim journeys, as enthusiastic Christians sought not just holy places, but also living embodiments of holiness in the shape of particularly celebrated ascetics (Frank 2000). The fifth-century Syrian bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus wrote a vivid *Historia Religiosa* listing many such individuals. In his prologue, he makes plain the utility of visiting them and of recounting stories of their achievements:

> How fine it is to behold the contests of excellent men, the athletes of virtue, and to draw benefit with the eyes; when witnessed the objects of our praise appear enviable and become desireable, and impel the beholder to attain them. No middling profit, however, derives from the mere narration of such achievements, communicated by those who know of them to the hearing of those who do not.
>
> *(Theodoret,* Historia Religiosa, *prologue 1; Price 1985 trans., 3)*

Theodoret's work is only one example of a significant body of literature generated by this traffic to 'living saints', some of it presenting travelogues of visits to monasteries, such as the *History of the Monks in Egypt* (Russell and Ward 1980) or Palladius' *Lausiac History* (Meyer 1964), some collecting the most inspirational sayings of monks and nuns (Harmless 2004; Ward 2003).

While there is a perceptible shift in the fourth century from martyrs to ascetics as models of sanctity, we should resist the temptation to draw a sharp distinction between them, or to see one as effortlessly supplanting the other. Even under hostile emperors, not every Christian could become a martyr, and there was already a strong ascetic impulse in early Christianity before Constantine, as there was also, for instance, in Judaism and certain philosophical strains of paganism (Brown 1988: 37–40; Clark 2000). Many martyrs had manifested traits of renunciation that resembled that of later hermits and coenobites (Brown 1988: 204). Moreover, the idealisation of the martyrs as Christianity's greatest heroes who could inspire the faithful continued long after persecutions ceased. In a number of sermons delivered around 400, bishop Chromatius of Aquileia in northern Italy described the martyrs as an 'ornament of the Church' (*Sermon* 9.1) and noted how the blood of the martyrs was prefigured in the crimson cloak worn by Christ on his way to crucifixion (*Sermon* 19.2). Prudentius' *Peristephanon* attests to the same phenomenon.

But the relevance of martyrs represented much more than abstract idealism. Constantine's conversion was only a staging post in Christianity's journey to dominance; for much of the century (in some places longer) that followed, Christians coexisted with pagans, Jews and others in relative peace. Yet there were occasional outbreaks of violence, as when a group of Christian missionaries in the high Alps above Verona met their deaths in conflict with local pagans and were immediately venerated as martyrs (Paulinus, *Life of Ambrose* 52). A further consequence of Constantine's action was that, beyond the imperial frontiers, non-Christian polities increasingly came to view Christianity as synonymous with the Roman empire and regarded Christians in their midst with suspicion. We hear, for instance, of sporadic persecutions of Christians living among the Goths, sometimes in the wake of Romano-Gothic hostilities (Heather and Matthews 1991: 103–32). In no small measure, the Romans themselves encouraged this view: Constantine himself had written to the Persian king Shapur II (309–79) commending to him the Christians living in his realm since they were Constantine's responsibility as Christian emperor (Eusebius, *V.C.* 4.8–14; Smith 2016); meanwhile, a major impulse for Christian conversion of the Goths came from the appointment of Ulfilas as bishop in Gothic lands by an imperial church council (Heather and Matthews 1991: 133–54).

Even within the Christian empire, there remained opportunities for confrontation between Christians and the state as Roman emperors championed different versions of Christian orthodoxy and church order. Those on the opposing side often saw themselves as still at risk of persecution and martyrdom. A particularly pronounced 'church of the martyrs' developed in North Africa as a by-product of the so-called Great Persecution inflicted on the church by Diocletian from February 303. Once the purge ended, the question arose of what to do with those who had capitulated to the persecuting authorities. A hardline group, known as the Donatists, argued that such 'traitors' (*traditores*) should not be readmitted to the church, but they found themselves in a minority, opposed by most churches in Africa and elsewhere (see Chapter 44 of this work). Nevertheless, they held firm and soon found themselves victims of imperial repression. In response, they generated accounts of their own martyrs, in which otherwise unimpeachably orthodox Christian emperors (such as Constantine's son Constans) appear in unfamiliar guise as tyrannical persecutors, as well as producing their own distinctive versions of earlier martyr acts, such as those of Cyprian of Carthage (Tilley 1996).

The trend was wider, however. During the fourth century, many emperors championed the theological teachings of Arius, which had initially been condemned at the council of Nicaea in 325. Defenders of Nicene Christianity, such as the redoubtable bishop Athanasius of Alexandria, could suffer exile for their determined defence of what they regarded as Christian truth. In such circumstances, it was not difficult to imagine the spectre of persecution reviving once more. For example, the pro-Arian emperor Constantius II (337–61) exiled a number of western ecclesiastics who thought

in precisely these terms: one, bishop Lucifer of Cagliari, penned a vituperative attack on the emperor called *On the Necessity of Dying for the Faith*; his fellow exile, the Gallic bishop Hilary of Poitiers addressed an angry polemic against Constantius, comparing him with the pagan persecutors of old and even the Antichrist (Flower 2016). Even when bishops remained in their cities, the merest whiff of heretical opposition could provoke lively imaginative recreations of persecution and martyrdom: such was the case in Milan in the mid 380s, where bishop Ambrose found himself locked in a power struggle with the heterodox court of the emperor Valentinian II (375–92) and his mother Justina. Once again, memories of persecution and martyrdom were conjured up, as Augustine tells us in an eyewitness report:

> Justina, mother of the young emperor Valentinian, was persecuting your servant Ambrose in the interest of her heresy. She had been led into error by the Arians. The devout congregation kept continual guard in the church, ready to die with their bishop, your servant. There my mother, your handmaid, was a leader in keeping anxious watch and lived in prayer.
>
> *(Augustine,* Confessions *9.7.15; Chadwick 1991 trans., 164–5 (adapted))*

Ambrose sought spiritual endorsement of his righteousness in the form of discovering, under divine inspiration, the bodies of hitherto unknown martyrs, Gervasius and Protasius, between whose skeletons the bishop remains entombed to this day (McLynn 1994: 209–19).

Writings on the saints

From what has been discussed so far, it is clear that saints, whether martyrs or ascetics, existed not only as objects of veneration, but also as the subjects of texts. A strong narrative impulse is clear in Christian writings from an early stage, with the creation of a gospel tradition already by the late first century. While one of the chief influences on such texts was to demonstrate how Jesus' earthly ministry confirmed the prophecies found in Hebrew scripture (what became the Christian Old Testament), the texts, written in Greek, were influenced by a variety of models from ancient narrative literature. The different approaches taken by the authors of both canonical and non-canonical gospels in emphasising particular episodes of Christ's life echoes an approach taken to writing the lives of ancient historical figures adopted by the Greek Plutarch (*c.* 46–120), who was writing roughly in the same period as the gospels took literary form. In particular, he wrote to offer inspiring moral lessons to his readers, by means of both positive and negative examples.[4] Moreover, his approach was self-consciously selective:

> [i]f I do not record all their most celebrated achievements or describe any part of them exhaustively, but merely summarize for the most part what they accomplished, I ask my readers not to regard this as a fault. For I am writing biography, not history, and the truth is that the most brilliant exploits often tell us nothing of the virtues and vices of the men who performed them, while on the other hand a chance remark or a joke may reveal far more of a man's character than the mere feat of winning battles in which thousands fall, or of marshalling great armies, or laying siege to cities.
>
> *(Plutarch,* Life of Alexander *1.1–2)*

Such an approach, in which biographical details were selected because they were inspirational, can be found not just in the gospel tradition but also in the accounts offered of Christian martyrs and ascetics.

In the second century, Christians began to feel the need to create texts that dealt with the sufferings of martyrs, not only in terms of providing a narrative of how they had died but also offering

explanations of the meanings that should be attached to their deaths (Perkins 1995). The earliest extant examples come in the form of letters written from communities that had felt the grip of persecution to brethren elsewhere in the empire: thus the account of Polycarp's death was written as a letter 'from the church of God dwelling in Smyrna to the church of God at Philomelium and to all the communities of the holy Catholic Church everywhere' (*Martyrdom of Polycarp*, preface; Musurillo 1972 trans., 3). These circulated widely and can be seen to underpin the narratives of martyrdom that punctuate Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclesiastical History*: for instance, his account of the sufferings of Christians in a persecution at Lyons and Vienne in central Gaul in 177/8 is essentially a verbatim quotation from a letter sent by the Gallic Christian communities to their brethren in the provinces of 'Asia and Phrygia who have the same faith and hope in the redemption' (Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.1.3). The extent to which this epistolary convention became part of the accepted literary style of martyr texts can be seen from the way it was imitated in late accounts: a Greek narrative of a fourth-century Gothic martyr, Sabas, is couched as a letter from 'the church of God dwelling in Gothia to the church of God dwelling Cappadocia and all the other communities of the holy Catholic Church everywhere' (trans. Heather and Matthews 1991: 111 (adapted)): the verbal parallels with the preface to Polycarp's martyrdom could hardly be starker.

In some cases, these accounts of martyrdom owe something to court records, of the type which Prudentius claimed were destroyed for the sufferings of Emeterius and Chelidonius, although the extent to which the versions that survive are genuine is contestable (Barnes 2010: 54–66). It is clear that many of the surviving texts were significant literary elaborations of such bare court records. A famous example is the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, recounting the death of a Christian lady and her slave at Carthage in 203, where a later redactor has skilfully blended elements of a confrontation in court with other texts, including a prison diary from Perpetua herself, which features an astonishing dream sequence in which she foresees her death in allegorical form (Barnes 2010: 66–74; see Chapter 49 of this work).

The purpose of such recastings was to make the martyr acts articulate a cogent message. The account of Polycarp's trail, torture and death is redacted in such a way as to stress that Polycarp's sacrifice evoked that of Christ during his passion (Clancy 2009: 113–18). Thus Polycarp is arrested on a Friday and goes willingly with his captors, just as Christ had done at Gethsemane (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 7). Moreover, the official who presides over his arrest and trial is called Herod, a parallel which prompts comment from the author of the text in its present form: 'destiny had given him the same name, that Polycarp might fulfil the lot that was appointed to him, becoming a sharer with Christ, and those who betrayed him might receive the punishment of Judas' (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 6; Musurillo 1972 trans., 7). When Polycarp is condemned to be burned alive, he is threatened with being nailed to the gibbet, but rejects this quasi-crucifixion as unnecessary, since Christ's example will suffice to keep him steadfast (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 13–14). After the pyre is lit, the flames do not touch Polycarp, but instead encircle him so that he gives off an aroma like baking bread: here the text evokes both imagery of the Eucharist and of the three Hebrews whom Nebuchadnezzar had tried to burn alive (Daniel 3). In the end, when the flames do not kill Polycarp, the executioners stab him with a dagger, at which point a great quantity of blood gushes forth from the wound, together with a dove (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 16), evoking further episodes of Christ's death on the cross. That the civic official Herod shares the name as Jewish rulers reviled by Christians also points to the text's notable anti-Semitism: it is, for instance, the Jews of Smyrna who cry out (with their pagan neighbours) for Polycarp to be killed (again evoking gospel parallels); and it is they who enthusiastically assembled the pyre on which Polycarp was to be burned (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 12–13).

Similar literary concerns can be found in the lives of ascetics. By combating demons, curing the sick and performing miracles, ascetic saints could be presented as resembling Christ just as much as the martyrs (e.g. see Stancliffe 1983: 363–71 for a survey of Martin's miracles). It is also clear that the authors of hagiography were keen to stress a connection between ascetics, and presented their lives accordingly. We saw that the *Life of Anthony* was being read in the west already in the late fourth

century. In turn, this *Life* exercised a powerful influence over the authors of other hagiographies (Stancliffe 1983: 98–9). For example, Paulinus, who was asked to write a life of Ambrose of Milan by Augustine, noted that the commission required:

> [t]hat I should follow the example set by those holy men bishop Athanasius and Jerome the priest, who penned the lives of St Paul and St Anthony, dwellers in the desert, and by [Sulpicius] Severus, that servant of God, who composed the Life of Martin, the revered bishop of Tours.
>
> *(Paulinus,* Life of Ambrose *1; Hoare 1954 trans., 149)*

Episodes in which a saint resembled a model like Anthony might therefore be stressed by explicit citation. But the same effect could be achieved more subtly, by means of intertextual echoes, evoking the language in which the saintly archetype had been described. The collection of lives of monks who lived in the Jura mountains in eastern Gaul in the fifth century, for instance, has been shown to be patterned on the *Life of Anthony*.[5] The purpose of such references and allusions was to stress that the monks belonged to a correct tradition. Indeed, one of the chief functions of ascetic hagiography was to present lives that provided a charter for their followers to emulate. Thus, in the middle of his hagiography, when Anthony is asked by the monks of Arsinoe to provide them with instruction on how to live, he launches into a long speech that amounts to a monastic rule (Athanasius, *Life of Anthony* 17–43; Rousseau 2000). The enormous literary outpourings associated with the fourth-century Coptic monk Pachomius reveal striking parallels between stories told about the saint in the various redactions of his *Life* and the monastic rules that emanated from his monasteries (Rousseau 1985: 106, 174–5). In short, anyone who read a life could aspire to live the life too.

Saints' lives were didactic texts, then, advocating a particular position among a number of other possibilities. For example, there was a lively genre of philosophical lives circulating in late antiquity, dealing with philosophers of the Neoplatonic tradition and penned by distinguished philosophers such as Porphyry and Iamblichus (Clark 2000). Some hagiographers plainly regarded this alternative as a target. Anthony, for instance, is described as disputing with (and, of course, triumphing over) philosophers (Athanasius, *Life of Anthony* 72–80). Suplicius Severus highlights the opposition in stark language in the preface to his *Life of Martin*, where he contrasts hagiography with secular biography: 'what does posterity gain by reading of Hector fighting or Socrates philosophising?' (*Life of Martin* 1). A Christian reader would do better to study Martin's life, it is implied – but Sulpicius Severus' language was so heavily laden with stylistic tics drawn from a number of classical Latin authors that the ancient past was, in a sense, always present in his writings (Stancliffe 1983: 58–61).

Even within Christianity, the various works of hagiography are also aware that they should present saints who conformed to correct models, worthy of emulation. For example, martyrs should observe correct deportment: while martyrdoms might prompt other Christians to the ultimate sacrifice, there was always a risk that when faced with the instruments of death, a candidate's nerve might fail. The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* stresses this neatly: the first death in the text is that of one Germanicus, whose heroism inspires others. But one of the next candidates, a certain Quintus the Phrygian, immediately regrets his choice when confronted with wild beasts and succumbs to pressure to offer sacrifice to the gods; to make matters worse, Quintus had actually offered himself up as a martyr (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 4). By contrast, Polycarp's calmness – joyousness, even – in the face of death makes it clear how a martyr *should* behave. As for ascetics, it is clear from the outset that they were expected to conform to the correct definition of orthodox Christianity. Thus Anthony is presented as a vigorous opponent of the Arian heresy, even engaging in polemical disputations with its supporters (Athanasius, *Life of Anthony* 68–70, 82, 86) – it can hardly be a mere happy coincidence that this adheres to the theological loyalties of the author of the life, bishop Athanasius of Alexandria. Similarly, the lives of Martin of Tours and Ambrose of Milan were written in the shadow of recent conflicts over orthodoxy in the west; once again, both saints are presented as unimpeachably orthodox.

It should also be noted that the authors of saints' lives sought to associate themselves with their subjects. Thus the various accounts of martyrdoms were often presented as eyewitness accounts. The conclusion to the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, for example, contains a detailed account of how the text came to be redacted. Similarly, numerous authors of the lives of ascetics similarly stressed their affinity with their subject. At the end of his *Life of Anthony*, Athanasius claims to have come into possession of a few pieces of the saint's property (ch. 92). Sulpicius Severus and Paulinus both claimed authority for their accounts on the basis that they had been associates of Martin and Ambrose (*Life of Martin* 25–6; *Life of Ambrose* 1). One of the most instructive of these lives about the relationship between author and saint comes in a text that might well be largely fictional, the *Life of Pelagia*, an Antiochene prostitute who converted to Christianity in the fourth century and lived out her days as a transvestite monk (under the masculine form of her name, 'Pelagius') at Jerusalem (Brock and Harvey 1987: 40–62). In large measure, Pelagia is a vehicle through which the author of the life, a priest called Jacob, articulates his views on a number of issues: he presents a gloriously vivid physical description of Pelagia decked out in her courtesan's finery in a passage which exemplifies the danger she poses in terms of carnal pollution. Of equal concern to Jacob are the activities of a bishop called Nonnus, a product of a Pachomian monastery at Tabennesi in Egypt, whose associate Jacob claims to be: it is Nonnus who looks upon Pelagia and sees her for the sinner she is; it is Nonnus who presides over her conversion and baptism; and it is Nonnus alone who knows that the monk Pelagius is none other than the former prostitute and who instructs Jacob to seek her/him out when he visits Jerusalem. The life, then, is as much about Nonnus as it is about Pelagia (Coon 1997: 79–82).

Of course, such closer personal connections could arouse suspicions that authors were exaggerating. Sulpicius Severus bookends his *Life of Martin* with expressions of anxiety in this regard (ch. 1) and an assertion that he is simply not up to the task of extolling Martin's sanctity, so great was it (ch. 26). This latter factor, in which the author protests his inadequacy to the task of recounting the saint's life, is a well-known classical literary trope, the *captatio benevolentiae*, by means of which an author sought their audience's indulgence. It was a striking feature of Ciceronian oratory; it can also be found in a string of hagiographies from Sulpicius Severus around 400 to Eugippius, author of the Danubian-set *Life of Severinus* in the sixth century, and beyond. Such special pleading could achieve interesting results. In a life he wrote of his sister Macrina, the Cappadocian father Gregory of Nyssa stated that he would not pile up accounts of her miracles, for fear that they would be disbelieved; but he manages to get around this obstacle by quoting at great length an account of one of her miracles told to him by an unnamed military officer whom he met on his travels (*Life of Macrina* 36–9).

The development of cult: saints, place and power

In one striking respect, Christian hagiography, whether it deals with martyrs, ascetics or any other category of saint, differed from secular accounts of individuals' lives: their accounts did not end with their subjects' deaths. On the contrary, both martyr acts and stories of saints often included lengthy descriptions of miraculous events that happened after their death and burial, and which were proof of their continued power and holiness. If death marked only the end of the earthly sojourn of the immortal soul in the mortal body, then it followed that the saint continued to live, in the company of their Saviour, for eternity. For that reason, the occasion of a saint's death was often recast as their *dies natalis*, their birthday, as the day in which they were born into the life eternal (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 18).

A particularly vivid collection of post-mortem miracles is presented in Paulinus' account of Ambrose of Milan. He was seen in visions in a number of places after his death, not just at Milan but also at Florence, where his appearance galvanised the citizens when they were besieged by the Goths in 406 (Paulinus, *Life of Ambrose* 49–50). He was also seen in visions in Africa, where Paulinus was writing the work, and even struck down a bishop there who had disparaged his memory (ch. 54). For Paulinus, the message of such occurrences was plain, and they should be regarded as part of a continuum with Ambrose's achievements during his lifetime:

> I exhort and beg each person who reads this book to imitate the life of the holy man, to praise the grace of God and shun the tongues of slanderers if he wishes to have fellowship with Ambrose in the resurrection of life rather than, with those slanderers, to undergo a punishment that no-one who is wise does not avoid.
>
> *(Paulinus,* Life of Ambrose *55; Ramsey 1997 trans., 218)*

These accounts of post-mortem miracles demonstrate that hagiographical texts were a central element in a developing cult of saints, and were as essential to it as the shrines at saints' tombs. From tentative beginnings in the second century, the cult of saints expanded exponentially in the fourth and fifth centuries, as particular local churches actively fostered the memory of their saints, not least by means of a vigorous trade in relics, which were either body parts of saints or items that they had used (or, increasingly, objects that had come into contact with other relics) (Brown 1981; Clark 1999; Yasin 2009). We have seen how the discovery of the remains of Gervasius and Protasius was central to Ambrose of Milan's victories over his foes at the imperial court; in time, they became useful also for the greater glorification of the Milanese church, as relics of those saints (and others, like Nabor and Felix) were disseminated around northern Italy (and as far as Gaul and Africa) as a sort of saintly buttress to Ambrose's personal influence (Clark 1999: 364–70).

Few places were as rich in saints or relics as the city of Rome, and the fourth and fifth centuries saw the cult aspects of the veneration of the holy dead on a whole new footing. Particularly under the pontificate of Pope Damasus (366–84), the tombs of martyrs in the catacombs were renovated and decked out with fine verse inscriptions extolling the holiness of earlier martyrs and Roman bishops (Sághy 2015). This focus on the saints helped also to recalibrate the city's calendar away from a litany of pagan festivals to one punctuated by the feast days of particular saints: evidence from the *Chronography of 354* suggests that this was already under way by the fourth century, although Christianity still had to compete with a range of secular festivals until the sixth century (Salzman 1990). Chief among Rome's saints were the apostles Peter and Paul, and their cult received particular attention from both popes and emperors. For the popes, their association with Peter in particular became a matter of more than otherworldly concern, since by invoking Jesus' statement to Peter that he was the rock on which Christ founded the church (Matthew 16:18), Rome's bishops could claim to have special authority over other churches across Christendom. This development was only fully articulated by bishops like Leo I in the fifth century, by which time Rome's claims to primacy were attracting competition, not least from Constantine's new imperial city in the eastern empire, Constantinople. As a new (re)foundation, Constantinople was bereft of important saints of its own; but throughout the fourth and fifth centuries we see emperors seeking to buttress their city's religious capital by importing the relics of a range of saints, not least those claimed to belong to apostles who had known Christ during his earthly ministry. That this was no insignificant matter is shown by the elaborate ceremonial that welcomed such relics, in which the emperor and the city's population participated alongside the clergy (Ward-Perkins 2012: 60–2), as seen in the fifth-century CE ivory panel relief showing the arrival of relics in Constantinople (Figure 25.2).

The trends outlined here for great centres like Rome and Constantinople can be replicated across the Mediterranean world, where local calendars and local topography were marked by saints' feast days and shrines. Over time, the popularity of the saints increased, not least among the Christian laity. Vivid evidence of their enthusiasm can be found in the practice of burial *ad sanctos* ('near the saints'), as Christians hoped, by being buried near a saint, they might share in the grace that flowed from those whom Peter Brown has called 'the very special dead' (Brown 1981: 69–85; Yasin 2009: 222–37). Tales of miracles occurring at saints' tombs become a more common feature of hagiography, attesting to how the saints were regarded as special intercessors between heaven and earth.

While this development of saints' cults was vigorous, it was not without controversy. Already in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* we see anxieties about the meaning of the veneration of saints when the text turns to discuss the fate of the martyr's body. Worries that veneration of Polycarp's relics might mean Christians 'abandon the Crucified and begin to worship this man' are placed in the mouths of local

Figure 25.2 Ivory relief panel, fifth century, showing the ceremonial arrival of relics (left) in Constantinople, where they are greeted by clergy and members of the imperial family (right). Now in Trier. Photo Wikicommons

Jews; but the author of the text dismisses this as sheer folly: 'Little did they know that we could never abandon Christ, for it was he who suffered for the redemption of those who are saved, the innocent one dying on behalf of sinners' (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 17: Musurillo 1972 trans., 15–17). In short, regarding the veneration of martyrs as somehow weakening faith in Christ is absurd; if anything, it gives additional focus to reverence for Jesus, whose salvific majesty is amplified by the martyr. Yet anxieties about cult honours did not dissipate. Athanasius' reports that Anthony was horrified he might be mummified and his body become an object of worship, so he gave instructions that the location of his burial be kept secret. None of this was an impediment to his cult, since fame of his holiness spread far and wide, not least through Athanasius' *Life*, and relics, in the form of Anthony's paltry possessions, existed in any case (*Life of Anthony* 90–3). Meanwhile, Sulpicius Severus reports that Martin of Tours, in addition to demolishing various pagan shrines, also purged Tours of a spurious saint's cult: near the city was an altar dedicated, so it was believed, to a martyr; but Martin was suspicious and, after praying to God for guidance, was gifted with a dream in which the person buried in the tomb revealed himself to be not a martyr, but a bandit (*Life of Martin* 11; Stancliffe 1983: 164). This insistence on distinguishing the authentic from the false will have served to underscore that any cult developing around Martin would of course be genuine.

In some ways, the cult of saints, and the hagiography that accompanied it, became a victim of its own success. A text preserved under the name of Pope Gelasius I (492–6), but perhaps the product of a church council in Gaul or Italy, offers a stern judgement on the proliferation of saints' lives: there are so many and their authorship is so often uncertain that injudicious use of them might lead to pollution by heresy (*Decretum Gelasianum* 4.4). This episode of wariness from the end of the early Christian period is an opportune moment at which to conclude this survey, for it demonstrates that the cult of saints and hagiography were not, as rationalist historians have argued, examples of the degeneracy of late antique Christian culture; on the contrary, they represent something of the dynamic creativity of the age. Moreover, this was a creativity that would be pursued throughout the Middle Ages and beyond, as notions of martyrdom and sainthood became firmly rooted in the Christian imagination.

Additional note: accessing hagiography in English translation

For the acts of the martyrs, there is a complete collection in Musurillo (1972). Unfortunately, it is extremely unreliable (see Barnes 2010: 352–3), with poor texts, often inaccurate translations

and an overall lack of critical acumen. Rebillard (2017) begins the task of replacing it. Carolinne White has presented two volumes of saints' lives. One (1998) contains many of the seminal lives, including those of Anthony and Martin; the *Life of Anthony* presented here, however, is not based on the Greek text of Athanasius, but on the Latin translation by Evagrius. The other (2010) assembles a range of texts pertaining to female saints, from Perpetua and Felicitas in the third century to a number of fifth-century examples. Important series of translations encompassing hagiography include Cistercian Studies (Cistercian Publications: Kalamazoo) and Translated Texts for Historians (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press), though both contain a great deal of other texts as well. A useful collection of Syriac lives can be found in Brock and Harvey (1987). For western saints, the classic collection by Hoare (1954) is still serviceable, but needs updating in light of new critical editions of the texts.

Notes

1 Prudentius invokes Roman saints also in a verse polemic against paganism, the *Contra Symmachum* (for the context, see Cameron 2011: 337–49). Its two books are dedicated to Paul and Peter respectively. The evocation of Paul as 'saviour of the race of Romulus' (*Contra Symmachum* 1, praefatio 80), echoes themes found in the *Peristephanon*, where the martyrs are often described as rescuing pagans from their heathen folly (e.g. *Peristephanon* 1.94–6, on the people of the Ebro valley converted from paganism; 2.413–84, where Laurence prays that the people of Rome might be delivered from worship of the pagan gods).

2 For dating the martyrdom to 157 (and not the reign of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus (i.e. 161–9), as Eusebius mistakenly does), see Barnes 2010: 367–73.

3 For the Jura, see the hagiographies collected in Vivian *et al.* 1999; for the Apennines, consider the hermit Bassus mentioned in Eugippius, *Letter to Paschasius* 1; later, we find Benedict of Nursia similarly seeking remote locations in those mountains (Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* 2.1.1).

4 The most explicit statement of this is in Plutarch's prefaces to his lives of the Corinthian *condottiere* Timoleon (*c.* 337–283 BCE) and the Macedonian king Demetrius Poliorcetes (337–283 BCE; king 294–288 BCE). He states that writing biographies allows him 'to treat history as a mirror, with the help of which I can adorn my own life by imitating the virtues of the men whose actions I have described' (*Life of Timoleon* 1.1); and that he aims to show the truth of an otherwise unattested dictum of Plato 'that great natures produce great vices as well as great virtues' (*Life of Demetrius* 1.7).

5 The commentary in Vivian *et al.* 1999 highlights these links.

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26

TRANSLATION AND COMMUNICATION ACROSS CULTURES

Malcolm Choat

Already in the New Testament, the many language communities which co-existed in the Mediterranean are refracted through the unilingual lens of the Greek text. The Aramaic that was spoken in Judea in Jesus' time; the Hebrew which was read in the temple; the Latin spoken among the community at Rome to which Paul wrote; the local languages the apostles would have heard spoken as they dispersed through the cities in Asia Minor; all fade into the Hellenophone background. Speech in Hebrew is reported (Acts 21–22), and sometimes even directly, if briefly, quoted (John 20:16; Mark 15:34); Hebrew terms are translated (John 19; Matt. 1:23, 27:33; Mark 5:41) and Hebrew writing is reported (John 19:20). But despite this occasional intrusion of other languages, the linguistic variety which pervaded the eastern Mediterranean is ultimately reduced to a single channel, that of Greek.

Bi- and multilingualism in early Christianity

Recent work on bi- and multilingualism in the Roman world has revealed a complex world of code-switching, borrowing, loaning, interference and other phenomena which arose as a result of the sustained language contact which the Hellenistic kingdoms and the Roman empire made possible (Adams *et al.* 2002; Papaconstantinou 2010; Mullen and James 2012). Alongside more comprehensive and better informed recourse to linguistic research, attention to texts other than the literary productions of elites – especially papyrological and epigraphic documentary material – has illuminated the diglossia and bilingualism (of various types) which pervaded the Roman world. All this has informed further the background against which we must read the development and spread of Christianity in the Mediterranean world.

The early Christian writings are all in Greek. Despite inventive arguments (e.g. Black 1998; Edwards 2009), there is little real trace of an immediate underlying linguistic layer (such as direct translation from an Aramaic original) to any of the Gospels, which, with their explanation of scattered Semitic words and phrases, are written for Hellenophonic audiences who did not know Hebrew or Aramaic. This makes all the more surprising the virtually unanimous belief in antiquity that the Gospel of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew. As early as the first half of the second century, Papias (quoted in Eusebius, *HE* 3.39.16) asserted that 'Matthew compiled the *logia* in Hebrew language (*hebrais dialektos*), which everyone interpreted (*hermēneusen*) as they were able'. Irenaeus believed the same (*Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1), as did Origen in his (lost) commentary on Matthew

(*apud* Eusebius *HE* 6.25.4; see also 5.10.3). Naturally enough, these early testimonia were trusted by fourth-century writers such as Eusebius (*HE* 3.24.6), Epiphanius (*Pan.* 29.9.4, 30.3.7) and Jerome, who claimed a copy of this Hebrew Matthew survived in the library at Caesarea (*de vir. ill.* 3 and elsewhere, see Edwards 2009: 28–38).

The fact that no trace of this Hebrew gospel is extant, either itself or as a plausible *Vorlage* to the Matthew we have, has led to the belief that Papias was alluding to the 'Hebraic style' of Matthew, and that later writers misunderstood Papias, or their source, if it was not he (Luz 2007: 46–47; cf. Keener 1999: 39). Rather than attempting to re-interpret Papias, one might wonder what this apparently common (and apparently false) belief on the part of many early Christians that Matthew was written in Hebrew and translated into Greek (or that he wrote a gospel in each language) might say about the attitude of early Christians to the text. Was it important to some early Christians that there be a Hebrew text at the base of the tradition? Did this impart some form of authenticity to it? These questions may not be answerable, but they allow consideration of early Christian attitudes to translation and language.

As Christianity spread around the shores of the Mediterranean, it did so in Greek, the lingua franca in which it first evolved beyond the Aramaic and Hebrew-speaking environment of Jesus's mission (Buth and Notley 2014). Greek spanned the Roman empire in a way that Latin, which existed in the eastern empire mainly as an administrative and military language, did not. In many ways this was only natural: Greek was the language of the scriptures used by proto-Christian communities outside Palestine (and no doubt some within there as well), the Septuagint. The authors of the books of the New Testament were either native Greek speakers or, if a Jewish Christian – as Matthew has been routinely argued to be (Luz 2007: 47–48) – fully at home in Greek. And the movement was strongest in its early years in the eastern Mediterranean.

This linguistic preference imprints itself throughout Christianity in the first two centuries in various ways. Whatever languages the Christian mission was undertaken in during its first 150 years, its written output was exclusively in Greek. 1 Clement, written in Rome perhaps in the last first or early second century, is in Greek, as is Hermas, written some decades later in the same region. Irenaeus, who came from the east, wrote in his native Greek when in Lyon in the second half of the century, as did Hippolytus of Rome in the third. When the martyrs of Lyon and Vienne wrote a letter *c.* 177 CE to 'the brethren in Asia and Phrygia' telling of their travails, they also did so in Greek. When Marcion carried out his editorial programme in the mid second century, he collected the Greek scriptures. Early Christian epigraphy from the east is naturally in Greek (Tabbernee 1983, 1997; Breytenbach *et al.* 2016), but those few Christian inscriptions from Rome for which a second-century date has been posited are also in Greek (Snyder 2011, 2014; see also Wessel 1989). This linguistic profile may be interpreted in various ways, from being the native language of the writer (e.g. Irenaeus, Hermas, Marcion), the normal language for international epistolary communication (1 Clement; Letter of Lyon and Vienne), or the reflections of the linguistic norms of the community in which they arose (the inscriptions).

Whatever the reasons in individual cases, Christianity maintained its exclusively Hellenophone profile throughout much of the first two centuries. Yet necessity demanded the translation of the scriptures. Proselytisation among Latin-speaking peoples and sermons, homilies and especially liturgy in Christian communities in the west would have generated ad hoc translations of parts of scripture, but perhaps no more than the section required by the context. In 180, one of the Scillitan martyrs affirmed he was carrying *libri et epistulae Paulae*, perhaps more than the Pauline epistles; yet although the trial took place in North Africa, there is no guarantee he was not reading the scriptures in Greek, as others in the west had done to that point (Burton 2013: 177). At the start of the third century, Tertullian's many scriptural citations in his Latin works not infrequently witness different Latin versions of the same verse, suggesting that he too made his own translations from the Greek as he went (Houghton 2016: 5–7). There are scattered indications within his work that a translation of the New Testament (or at least the Pauline epistles) into Latin may have existed in his time

(Houghton 2016: 6, 2013: 377). Yet it is not until the mid third century, in the works of Cyprian, that we finally have clear evidence that a Latin translation of the New Testament was in circulation, and almost certainly had been for some time before he made use of it (Houghton 2013: 378, 2016: 9–11). Some of the earliest Latin manuscripts of the New Testament resemble Cyprian's quotations and likewise bear witness to the production of what the textual evidence strongly suggests was a single translation of the New Testament into Latin in the first half of the third century (Burton 2013: 178–180; Houghton 2013: 376, 2016: 12–14). Jerome's remark on the sheer multiplicity of the Latin versions before his translation is evidently an exaggeration (Houghton 2016: 11), but remains as a (perhaps unwitting) testimony to the variety of extemporaneous renderings of the Greek which preceded this. If this did not lead to wide discrepancies between various depictions of the teachings of Jesus and Paul, it did lead to subtle variations in the reporting of their messages.

The original language of the scriptures imprinted on the Latin of western Christians in subtle ways, bestowing a range of idioms on writings (and presumably speech) of North African and European Christians. Rather than generating a new variety of 'Christian Latin', Christianisation wove novel phraseology and new vocabulary into the Latin of early Christian writers (Houghton 2013: 377, 2016: 8–9). The implications of the long persistence of the use of the Greek New Testament in the western empire, and the prevalence of Greek among those Christians who wrote in the west, is worth considering. Does it speak to the linguistic makeup of the communities, a constellation of coincidences (e.g. Hellenophone correspondents and writers), or a pervasive privileging of the language of the scriptures, only slowly superseded by the western vernacular?

Around the Mediterranean, other linguistic interfaces may be detected within the early Christian communities. Apart from Latin, the most important are in Syria-Palestine, with Syriac and Aramaic (Brock 1997; Williams 2013), and in Egypt with the development of Coptic. Valuable witnesses to the translation of Christian scripture and other texts, and the way Christian missionaries, preachers and teachers interacted in non-Hellenophone (or bilingual) situations, may be derived from literary sources, such as those from the western empire. Egypt provides the opportunity to examine the papyrological record, not only for a deeper analysis of the multilingual world in which these interactions took place but also the physical traces of translation and communication across languages in the papyri.

The case of Egypt

Christianity arrived in Alexandria sometime during the first century CE; little more can be said for certain (Choat 2012a). Christian writings (some of them known only by repute) indicate Christian communities of various theological leanings in the city in the first half of the second century, which most likely had their ultimate source in the metropolis' vibrant Jewish community (Jakab 2001: 49–61; Pearson 2004: 43–81). The philosophical 'school' of Pantaenus and the writings of his follower Clement in the second half of the century show the continued trajectory of the Alexandrian Christian community's engagement with various intellectual influences (Jakab 2001: 91–106). There is however little to suggest the faith spread beyond the capital in this period beyond a small number of fragments of Christian scripture found at several points down the Nile (Roberts 1979; Bagnall 2009). These are of course in Greek, which remained the dominant language of the Church, as well as the administration and literary culture, in Egypt in this period. While Egyptian remained spoken by a significant (though unmeasurable) proportion of the population, the written forms of Egyptian had retreated into the temples: outside of a small number of letters in Demotic (Depauw 2007), only the literary productions of the temples, and (with decreasing frequency) monumental hieroglyphic inscriptions, bear witness to literacy in Egyptian (Depauw 2012; Hoffmann 2012; Klotz 2012). Given both the tight nexus between the Egyptian priesthood and the autochthonous script, and the fact that literacy in them was virtually restricted to that class, it was never likely that Christian texts would ever be translated into Demotic.

Another initiative of the priesthood, however, offered a way forward. Among the scribes training in the temple in Narmouthis (Medinet Madi) in the second- and third-century Fayum, some practised transcribing Egyptian words into Greek and incorporated Greek loan words (largely written in Greek characters in the midst of the otherwise Demotic text) into Egyptian syntax (Fewster 2002; Rutherford 2010). One such scribe copied a short text which gives the flavour of such compositions (Rutherford 2010: 201):

> 10. *Salios* does not know how to write in Greek. He *earns a living* in the villages(?) teaching himself in secret everyday.

The italicised words are in Greek script, the rest in Demotic, with the Greek infinitive incorporated into Egyptian syntax via the auxiliary verb *ir*.

Elsewhere in Egypt in the second and third centuries, various Egyptian ritual and astrological texts were rendered into Greek characters. When a scribe in Thebes copied a lengthy Demotic 'magical' text in the third century, he included interlinear glosses in Greek characters at many points (Dieleman 2005). Elsewhere another scribe transcribed a prayer to Osiris complaining about injustice into Greek characters, supplementing the alphabet where necessary with signs derived from Demotic (Satzinger 1975). In these seemingly largely uncoordinated attempts at representing Egyptian in Greek characters, we may discern a phenomenon which is generally referred to as 'Old Coptic' (Quaegebeur 1982; Satzinger 1991; Bagnall 2005).

Once standardised in the fourth century (certainly as a direct result of Christian use), Coptic developed in a number of dialects. A pan-Upper Egyptian vehicular dialect, Sahidic, rapidly acquired the status of both a regional koine, and the prestige variety of the language for literary use. Bohairic, the dialect of the Delta (which superseded Sahidic as the standard literary dialect round the start of the second millennium) is more difficult to properly assess in the early period, in part because fewer papyri survive from the Delta. Throughout Egypt, a number of regional dialects are visible, but with different levels of longevity: while Fayyumic survived in use until well after the Arab conquest, the Upper Egyptian dialects Achmimic and Lycopolitan (whose names may bear little relationship to where they originated) faded from use in the fifth century, as did other local dialects such as Mesokemic (centred round Oxyrhynchus). These dialects present in phonological and morphological variation, and have at times been argued to be merely orthographic variants of the same underlying language (Loprieno 1981–82, cf. Peust 1999: 34). Yet lexical variation between regions (Peust 1999: 327–328) indicates that real linguistic variation lies behind the differences we see in the texts, which presumably also existed – although it is almost impossible to trace in the autochonous Egyptian scripts – in earlier periods.

Alongside considerable advances in the understanding of Coptic, the koine Greek of Graeco-Roman Egypt is now becoming better understood, including with reference to factors of relevance here, such as the influence on it of Egyptian scribes (Evans and Obbink 2010; Evans 2012). Within the Greek papyri of the Roman period, the linguistic interface reveals itself primarily in the interpreters (*hermēneis*) who appear in various contexts, often translating in proceedings before officials, at times merely mentioned in passing as figures which might be found in a village or town (Mairs 2012). A second-century letter (SB 18.13867) which demands that the one reading the letter (unknown to the writer) 'make a small effort' and translate it for the women gives an insight into the translation of private documents within households. Little of this directly illuminates the translation, whether written or oral, or the Christian message into Egyptian, but does provide an insight into the prevailing bilingualism which enabled it.

It is not necessary to presuppose that proselytisation requires a full translation of scripture into the language of the target people, or that they all need to learn to speak the language in which the scripture is written, as the spread of Islam in many African and South and South-East Asian countries shows. In any case, it is clear that rather than being a non-indigenous elite language, Greek was used

at virtually all levels of Egyptian society in the Roman period, with bilingualism pervasive in various manifestations and levels of functionality. As has been argued in the case of Latin, it is not economical to suppose that the production of a full translation of the New Testament was the first stage of Christian engagement with speakers of Egyptian, or even the first aim. The conversions which undoubtedly took place in the Egyptian *chora* from the mid second to the end of the third century did not inherently require a translation of the New Testament into Coptic, neither did it apparently produce one. Accounts of the rise of Christian Coptic usually start with the period in which the written record appears, the second half of the third century (e.g. Wisse 1995). In a schema given prominence by its summary translation by Metzger (1977: 129–132), Kasser included a 'preliminary stage' in which improvised oral versions were made in the course of the spread of Christianity down the Nile Valley (Kasser 1965: 298–299). If Kasser's dating of this stage to 150–200 CE is too early, it underlines the fact that the Christian mission itself did not initially require the Coptic script itself to be developed or used: extemporised oral translations made in the course of discussing the gospel message would not have been written down (and certainly no such texts have survived even if they were): the Christian engagement with the Coptic script comes later.

The story of the spread of Christianity through Egypt provides an instructive account of the linguistic adaptations made in pursuit of the spread of the faith, even if the early stages of this story are unclear. Little is known about the spread of Christianity in Egypt beyond Alexandria in the second century, and the few fragments of Christian scripture on papyrus which can be dated to this period with any degree of confidence do not suggest anything beyond small communities largely confined to major urban centres (Bagnall 2009; cf. Roberts 1979). In the episcopate of Demetrius, Bishop of Alexandria *c.* 189–*c.* 232, converging lines of evidence indicate the formation or formalisation of Christian communities at multiple sites down the Nile (Choat 2012a). By the middle of the third century, a Christian with the thoroughly Egyptian name of Petosorapis son of Horos was being sought by the authorities in the village of Mermetha, in the south of the Oxyrhynchite nome (P.Oxy. 42. 3035; Luijendijk 2008: 177–184).

Literary sources provide little guide to the process by which Christianity spread: Eusebius, relying for the most part on traditions about Origen and the letters and other writings of Dionysius (Bishop of Alexandria 248–264), records only scattered information, and little which speaks to the question of the linguistic interface which must have attended the outreach of Christianity to Egypt beyond the capital. Reports by Dionysius of 'Egyptians' suffering during Decius' edict of mass sacrifice (Eusebius, *HE*, 6.41.19, 21) are difficult to press for details. The three days of discussion which took place at some point in Dionysius' episcopate in the Fayum (Eusebius, *HE* 7.24–25), during which he managed to convince a significant body of Christians that their chiliastic doctrines required adjustment, seem to have taken place in Greek, as one would expect in this highly Hellenised region. When, during the persecution under Valerian (*c.* 257–258), exile in the western Delta allowed Dionysius to meet 'brethren from Egypt' (Eusebius, *HE* 7.11.12, 17), nothing confirms that they spoke anything but Greek, as would be natural for many residents of the *chora*, who may not have been ethnically Egyptian at all, seeing as Dionysius merely characterises them as coming 'from Egypt', i.e. the Nile Valley as opposed to the Delta.

As Greek was thoroughly embedded in Egypt as a language spoken at many levels of society, there is little trouble believing that most or even all of the 'Egyptians' encountered in such reports spoke Greek. Nevertheless, a substantial portion of the population either could not, or preferred not to. And it is around this time of the episcopate of Dionysius that our first evidence for Christian use of Coptic appears. The careful standardisation that Coptic underwent during the first century of Christian engagement with the script necessitated a highly bilingual literate environment, such as would be found in the urban centres down the Nile. The process starts too early for it to be linked to monasticism, though monastic engagement was probably decisive in the fourth century in generating a large scale programme of translation and book production, and in the late third, urban ascetics such as the bilingual polymath Hieracas (Goehring 1999) provide a plausible urban locale for some

of the experimentation to which the early papyrus record bears witness. These early Coptic papyri (see Choat 2012b), largely derived through the antiquities trade with little or no record of provenance, still less any indication of who produced them, nevertheless each tell interesting stories about Christian engagement with the written Egyptian language.

Sometime around the middle of the third century, somewhere in upper Egypt (the provenance is unclear), a handsome copy of the book of Isaiah was produced (P. Beatty VII; Kenyon 1937). At some stage shortly thereafter, another scribe added a sequence of marginal glosses in Coptic. The Coptic used is a form of the Fayumic dialect and uses some archaic forms found only in other very early texts, and in some cases nowhere else. While Coptic came to use six to eight letters derived from Demotic for sounds not represented in the Greek alphabet, this scribe uses neither Demotic letters, nor the supralinear stroke used in later Coptic to represent a semi-vowel (for which our scribe uses an *iota*). He also uses an oblique stroke over some letters whose significance is not easy to interpret (see the discussion of W. E. Crum in Kenyon 1937: ix–xii).

Among the glosses, verbal phrases are common alongside nouns, by themselves or in longer phrases, such as at Isa. 16.2–3 ('take counsel concerning Aermon, make for her a shelter for (?) grief', as translated by Crum in Kenyon 1937: xi). Also notable is the occasional translation of morphological, rather than lexical, elements, such as at Isa. 54:16, where the Coptic glosses the tense and number (first singular of the first future), but not the meaning, of its Greek target; so too at Isa. 16:13–14, where two relative perfect conjugation bases, but no accompanying verbs, are given. The first editors assumed the texts were written by the owner 'for his own edification' (Crum in Kenyon 1937: ix). While the identity of the scribe is highly likely, the purpose is less clear. The selection of phrases to gloss is odd: 'of(?) God' (Isa. 44:5) must surely have been transparent to the reader who knew Greek well enough to translate all these glosses and make a marginal comment in Greek. A practical purpose is more likely, picking up phrases of interest to dwell on as the writer writes or talks on Isaiah.

The fact that the scribe uses no Demotic letters cannot indicate that these had not yet been formally adopted, as non-Christian 'Old Coptic' texts already use Demotic letters, as does the roughly contemporary Kellis 'Old Coptic Ostracon', a unique very early example of documentary use of pre-standardisation Coptic from the second half of the third century (Gardner 1999; Bagnall 2005). The supralinear stroke is likewise present in our earliest Coptic texts proper, seems visible in embryonic form in some 'Old Coptic' texts, and is clearly used in the Kellis 'Old Coptic Ostracon'. Rather than use these well-known Coptic orthographic strategies, the scribe of the Coptic in P.Beatty VII renders Egyptian as Greeks did Egyptian names, converting some sounds not represented in the Greek alphabet (e.g. /š/;/*dj*/) to Greek equivalents (/s/; /*kh*/, i.e. *chi*), and ignoring others (i.e. /*h*/). This idiosyncratic system seems not to be informed by any contact with the Egyptian priestly scribal traditions which had already begun to devise systems for how one should represent the Egyptian sounds and other linguistic elements in a Greek-based alphabet.

Perhaps this unfamiliarity with conventions, such as they existed, may indicate that the scribe did not come from an Egyptian background and needed such 'crib notes' to be able to discuss the text in Egyptian? He thus used simple orthographic strategies that came naturally to someone more familiar with Greek. We may compare one of the earliest examples of glossing Egyptian into Greek, a much earlier bilingual word-list, perhaps from the third century BCE, in which the Egyptian equivalents of a succession of Greek nouns (door, bed, talent, axe, iron, sword, seat, dove, donkey) are given in what is unsurprisingly, given the date, wholly Greek script (Quecke 1997). That list was presumably used for Greek settlers to be able to give simple commands or requests to locals; the owner of P.Beatty VII must have had a more developed intent.

Another very early example of translation from Greek to Coptic, which more closely resembles the Ptolemaic glossary, is provided by P.Lond. inv. 10825 (Bell and Thompson 1925). This is a glossary to Hosea and Amos, written on the back of a land register, which was itself probably written in *c.* 200 CE; the glossary could have been written any time in the 100–150 years after that (Bell and

Thompson 1925: 241–242). The dialect of the Coptic, a form of Mesokemic, suggests an origin in the Oxyrhynchite nome (Kahle 1954: ii, 220–224). What survives covers parts of Hosea and Amos, and probably originally treated those books in their entirety. As with most later Greek-Coptic glossaries, colons stand between Greek and Coptic. Some of the excerpting and abbreviational strategies employed in the Greek would seem to require its use alongside the full Greek text itself: at one place (corresponding to Hos. 2:12) the Greek reads only (in an abbreviated form) 'and now'; the Coptic has 'and now I will uncover'; in the same verse, for 'not rescue', the Coptic has 'and no one will rescue her'; in Hos 7:16, 'unlearned' is rendered in the Coptic by 'because of their unlearned tongue'. At Hos. 9:1, a heavily abbreviated 'gifts on every threshing floor' is translated by 'you have loved every gift'.

This glossary predates any known copy of the Minor Prophets in Coptic, from whose readings this text is on the whole independent. The rationale behind the selection is again not clear. These cannot be phrases which caused their quite proficient bilingual composer trouble: *ep oikon*, 'over the house' (Hos. 8:1), which appears on the papyrus simply as *epoik* and is translated literally, should have presented no problems. Sometimes the scribe goes for several lines of the biblical text without recording a gloss, writing none for words which might have been thought worthy of one, then records the meanings of relatively straightforward phrases. The purpose is thus difficult to divine: preparation for a full translation into Coptic (written or oral) should not have required the translation of simple words. It is more likely that, rather than this being a tool to use the Minor Prophets, it was a tool to construct another text, perhaps an oral catechetical analysis of them, or a written commentary on them. These may then be 'crib notes' to which a catechist might have recourse while discussing and explicating the book. If one was expecting to extemporise on the themes of the Minor Prophets, a translation of the parts the speaker wished to quote and address may have been useful, so as not to be lost for words at that point.

Our writer is not necessarily more confident in Coptic than in Greek, and knows Greek well enough to both abbreviate and expertly translate it into Egyptian (there is only one misunderstanding, and even that is merely a different punctuation to how the Greek is normally taken). The composer may have been one of the educated bilingual missionaries who carried Christianity beyond the Hellenised nome capitals in the second half of the third century, at just the time when we find a series of 'letters of recommendation' written by and to the Bishop of Oxyrhynchus (from where the glossary also probably comes), introducing catechumens being sent between communities with the information that they are being instructed in an particular book: Genesis, or the 'first stage of the gospel' (Luijendijk 2008: 81–151; Blumell 2012: 111–117). Their letters of recommendation are in Greek, but the rapid spread of Christianity through the countryside in the second half of the third century indicates that instruction and perhaps even preaching in Coptic must have been taking place by this time. Evidence for the introduction of Coptic into the educational system appears in a codex of wooden tablets from the second half of the third century, containing a variety of texts (Bodl. Gr. Inscr. 3019: Crum 1934; Parsons 1970; Cribiore 1996: no. 388): alongside fractions, declensions and conjugations are a paraphrase of Iliad 1:1–21 and Psalm 46.3–10. All are in Greek, except the last, in a version of Coptic which shows affinities with the Achmimic dialect. The hand which wrote the Coptic also wrote some of the Greek texts, including the Iliad paraphrase. The stage was thus set for the production of full translations.

The proof traditionally adduced that translation of the scriptures had taken place in the third century, Antony hearing the Gospel of Matthew in his village church around 270 (*Life of Antony* 3), in fact offers no sort of evidence that full translations had taken place by then, both because the translation of a passage in a homily could be easily extemporised or produced for the purpose, and moreover because the writer of the letters of Antony – now commonly believed to be genuine (Rubenson 1995) – was familiar with Alexandrian theology to a degree that means he must have had a Hellenic education himself and thus could probably have understood the sermon even if it had been delivered entirely in Greek.

Coptic palaeography remains less than perfectly understood in general; even in the case of Greek texts, palaeography is not a precise enough tool as to confidently state on which side of the Constantinian revolution a text may fall. It is thus difficult to chronologically plot the earliest translations of Christian scripture into Coptic (Wisse 1995; Feder 2007; Askeland 2012). The rapid linguistic standardisation of Coptic during the fourth century does however allow us to reasonably suspect that texts whose dialect and orthography departs significantly and consistently from later standards may lie in the first quarter of the fourth century or even earlier.

One such example is P.Bodmer 6 (Kasser 1960), which may date to the late third or early fourth century, and is part of the 'Dishna Library' argued (not without reason) to have been once owned by a Pachomian monastery (Robinson 2011). The version of Proverbs contained in this codex is written not in the standardised Sahidic of most of the codices in the assemblage, but in a 'proto-Theban dialect' which uses forms of the Demotic letters which are both different from those used in later 'classical' Coptic and similar to non-Christian 'Old Coptic texts' (Kasser 1991, 2003).

A bilingual codex in Hamburg dated to the late third or early fourth century shows at least two (or up to seven, on some estimates) scribes practising their craft in a codex containing Song of Songs, Lamentations and Ecclesiastes in Coptic, and the Acts of Paul and Ecclesiastes in Greek (Diebner and Kasser 1989). Some of the scribes wrote both Greek and Coptic. The scribes, who were not particularly well-trained in either Greek or Coptic, used a non-standard variety of the Fayumic dialect, and – highly unusually in contrast to later Coptic practice – mostly avoided the use of Greek words.

While the combination of texts is reminiscent of texts which proved popular in monasticism, it does not look like something compiled for use in church. The papyrus is of rough quality; the codex itself an uneven production. An educational, devotional and perhaps monastic context is likely, but whichever of these may be correct, a linguistic interface in a Christian context of scribal training in the Fayum is evident. An even more unusual combination is provided by Chester Beatty Ac. 1390 (Brashear *et al.* 1990), in which an excerpt from the Gospel of John (10:7–13:38) in the Lycopolitan dialect has been copied into the end of a codex containing mathematical texts in Greek. The Coptic writing exercise(?) may have been added sometime in the first half of the fourth century, after the production of the codex (itself dated to late third or early fourth century).

The copying of scriptural excerpts, such as Chester Beatty Ac. 1390 and Bodl. Gr. Inscr. 3019, assumes a model for copying and thus the existence of full translations, at least of the relevant books. These Bodmer and Hamburg codices seem, in their linguistic and palaeographical features, to be part of the first wave of recorded full translations in Coptic, among which we also find a codex containing Melito's *peri pascha*; 2 Maccabees; 1 Peter; and Jonah in Sahidic (Schøyen MS 193, ed. Goehring 1990) and a Gospel of Matthew in the Mesokemic dialect (also in the Schøyen collection; Schenke 2001; cf. Leonard 2014). Alongside these two complete (or virtually so) codices, there are pages from Coptic versions of Job, found in a house at Karanis (Browne 1979 no. 2; Van Minnen 1994: 72), and Genesis, found in the cartonnage of the cover to Nag Hammadi Codex VII, along with a letter or homily from the same source (P. Nag Hamm. C1–2). Among papyri dated to the fourth century, the Dishna library (Robinson 2011) contains copies of numerous scriptural texts in Coptic, mostly in Sahidic (Exodus, Deuteronomy), along with some in other dialects (e.g. Genesis in Boharic). A wide range of other texts, including the New Testament, other Christian literature (1 Clement, Hermas, the Apocalypse of Elijah), Manichaean scripture (from Kellis, Gardner 1996, 2007), and perhaps (depending on their date) the Gnostic and Hermetic works in the Nag Hammadi Library (Williams 1996; Lundhaug and Jenott 2015), complete a picture of a vigorous programme of translation into Coptic of a wide range of literature happening at sites throughout Egypt, in communities of various sorts (Smith 1998; Feder 2007).

With the increasing use of Coptic as a vehicle for private communication and literary purposes in the fourth century, late antiquity provides progressively more evidence for the multilingual milieu within which Christianity in Egypt moved towards cultural dominance. This can be viewed in the literary tradition of the Pachomian monastic federation, with its frequent mention of interpreters in

the narratives (e.g. in the Letter of Ammon, (ed. Goehring 1986), 5–6, 22–23, 28), and the bifurcated hagiographic tradition that produced closely related yet distinct Lives of Pachomius in both Greek and Coptic (Rousseau 1999: 37–48). From another angle, we can observe the thoroughgoing bilingualism of the papyrus assemblage from 'House 3' in the Dakhleh oasis village of Kellis, whose inhabitants wrote letters in both Greek and Coptic (also on occasion using Syriac), sometimes code-switching within the one letter (Gardner *et al.* 1999, 2014). For official communications and all legal purposes, Greek was retained; but among the personal documents (letters and private accounts), Coptic is strongly represented (Fournet 2009).

This dichotomy in language choice, in which Greek stays the preferred choice (and indeed the only legally permitted option) for any public document, remains until the Arab conquest, with Coptic only slowly beginning to be used for personal legal texts in the mid sixth century (Fournet 2010), by which time its use for other classes of personal documents, mostly letters, has increased considerably (Richter 2008; Fournet 2009). In ecclesiastical terms, Greek maintains its dominance in late antiquity. The Festal letters, by which the Bishops of Alexandria notified the Egyptian churches of the date of Easter and communicated other news, continued to be issued in Greek (though Coptic translations of them are increasingly apparent in the papyrological record). When a decorative wooden lintel was carved for the 'Hanging Church' (*kinesa el-Muallaqa*) in Cairo, perhaps as late as 735 CE, the accompanying text was in Greek (Török 2005: 351–358). Alongside this, original literary compositions in Coptic, including homilies, martyrdoms, monastic biographies and letters, became steadily more common, confirming the local language as an acceptable and useful option for such works. Its prominence was further raised in the centuries following the Arabic conquest, when it became both the norm for legal texts contracted between Egyptians and the vehicle for the elaborate output of monastic scriptoria such as the White Monastery in Sohag, before being superseded by Arabic for both daily use and literary composition in the second millennium, surviving thereafter only in the liturgy.

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PART VI

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27
THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

Carolyn Osiek

Introduction

The flow of early Christian writing did not cease with the New Testament and the second half of the first Christian century. With no evident break, it continued, including many of the works that would later be labeled 'apocryphal' and even 'heretical'.[1] Part of that stream of literary output constituted what in the mid seventeenth century came to be known as the 'Apostolic Fathers',[2] a collection of writings that was believed to have come not from the apostolic generation, but from those immediately trained by the apostles, and thus to be reflective of their faith. Several European scholars at that time took new interest in early Christian writings and seem to have seized on this idea in the same years with newly printed editions of most of these works, those of Barnabas, Clement, Hermas, Ignatius and Polycarp. The letter of Diognetus, the fragments of Papias and the *Apology* of Quadratus were added by A. Gallandi in 1765. The *Didache* or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* was not discovered until 1873. Published in 1883, it was then added to the collection.

Since the inception of the collection, its core has been the first five authors, Barnabas, Clement, Hermas, Ignatius and Polycarp, along with, once it was added, the *Didache*. Diognetus, Papias and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* have drifted in and out, depending on the degree to which each editor wishes to be inclusive. Quadratus has more frequently been grouped with his own classification of second-century apologists, where Diognetus also belongs by genre. The early second-century writer Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, is said to have written five books of traditional and historical recollections that, unfortunately, survive only in quotations from later church writers. Thus there is no literary coherence to his surviving work. Here we will consider the two *Letters of Clement*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Letter of Barnabas*, the *Didache*, the *Letters of Ignatius and Polycarp* and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*. All texts are readily accessible to English readers.[3]

Even within this more limited list, the diversity of literary genre is impressive and somewhat daunting: letters, treatises, apocalypse, church order and martyrdom account. As with the books of the New Testament, each arises from a specific context in the continuous life of Christians, which was of course lived within their own Greco-Roman and Jewish culture. Also, as with the New Testament, any attempt to synthesize or harmonize would be futile. Unlike the New Testament, as seen in the previous paragraph, there is not even full agreement on the number of writings in the collection. Some of these writings have left us considerable evidence of their context, and some precious little. Most of these works have always been known to scholars, though many of them suffered neglect over the centuries. They have been thought to represent the church immediately after the

time of the writing of the New Testament, yet some of the earlier writings of the Apostolic Fathers (*1 Clement*, the *Didache*) may predate the last of the New Testament books. Their total time span is probably from the end of the first to somewhere in the middle of the second century. Thus rather than being the next step in Christian literature, they are really the overlapping and continuing thread that carries Christian tradition into the second century, 'a messy, confrontational century' (Wagner 1994: 223) that would end with an older, wiser, but more diverse Christianity than it began.

All of these writings might be said to contain in some way and in varying extent two factors: *paraenesis* or general moral teaching, and some issue of relationship to Israel. These factors give us a glimpse of some of the problems and challenges that beset these churches: how to maintain fervour and seriousness in a growing movement and how to sort out its increasingly complex and hostile situation vis-à-vis Judaism with its distinctive religious claims. Beyond that and their chronological affinity, there is not much that links them all.

Though the rhetorical strategy of *1 Clement* is specific, it contains elements of general *paraenesis*. The same could be said for the *Letter of Barnabas*. While the *Shepherd of Hermas* is an apocalypse in structure, it contains long passages of moral instruction. The *Didache* is predominantly paraenetic but concludes with an apocalypse. The *Letters of Ignatius and Polycarp*, letters of friendship, thanks and persuasion, often include paraenetic sections. Even the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, a theologized account of the protagonist's execution, offers him and others as examples of what to do and what not to do (2.1; 4.1).

The best way to describe the relationship of the earliest Christians to Israel is to say that they were part of it. The majority of the first generation were certainly Jews, and the Scriptures were an integral part of their teaching and worship. It is not clear at what point a majority Gentile Christianity completed its separation from its parent faith, but this process of the creation of a new identity was probably complete by the middle of the second century – which is not to say that there were no more conversions or families of mixed faith beyond that time. The Apostolic Fathers reflect a variety of steps along the way. *1* and *2 Clement* draw widely on the Hebrew Scriptures and presume their validity for interpretation of the present Christian situation. The *Shepherd of Hermas* does the same for Hellenistic Jewish paraenetic traditions and seems to contain echoes of some major Jewish intertestamental writings, especially *4 Ezra*. The *Didache* uses both. Ignatius has emerged from identification with Judaism (*Ioudaismos*) and asserts its inferiority to *Christianismos* (*Epistle to the Philadelphians* 6.1), while the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* acts out the new antagonistic relationship that will henceforth characterize the interaction between the two groups by implying that Jews participated in the persecution of the bishop-martyr and prevented his followers from getting his body after his death (12.1; 13.1; 17.2; 18.1). At the far extreme, Barnabas' entire message is that where Jews misunderstand the covenant and the law, Christians get them right. Thus within the collection of the Apostolic Fathers, the full range of ambiguous attitudes toward Judaism can be seen.

The writings

1 Clement

1 Clement may be the best known of the Apostolic Fathers today. It was included with the New Testament in the fourth-century Codex Alexandrinus. The text has therefore always been known and revered. By internal evidence, it is a letter from the church of Rome to the church of Corinth on the occasion of some kind of upheaval of leadership in the Corinthian church, in which the author seeks to persuade the Corinthians to return to the previous arrangement. Early tradition attaches to the letter the name of Clement, around whom there is more legend than historical information. An enormous amount of apocryphal literature was attached to his figure (Lightfoot and Harmer 1891: 1.14–103), ranging from his association with Peter in Rome to his exile by Trajan in the Crimea and the miraculous discovery there of his underwater tomb!

What can probably be safely affirmed is that Clement was a prominent leader in the Roman church toward the end of the first century and that there may be a connection between the Christian writer Clement and the family of Titus Flavius Clemens, who was executed and his wife, Flavia Domitilla, exiled by Domitian (81–96 CE) on a charge of atheism (that is, neglect of civil religion) and Judaizing (Dio Cassius, *Epitome* 67.14).

Church historians from Eusebius on have interpreted this charge of acquiring Jewish customs as a misinterpretation of the embracing of Christianity. Not that this Flavius Clemens would be the author of the letter, but it was the common custom of freedmen to adopt the personal name of their patron,[4] and it could be that large numbers of his household were Christian. Later church tradition names Clement as second or third successor of Peter as bishop of Rome. Since the leadership structure of a single bishop probably did not come to Rome for another century, this is obviously later harmonization, which does not preclude the possibility that Clement was indeed a strong leader in the Roman church of his time.

There is also a location in Rome with a very old tradition connecting it to the name of Clement. The *Titulus Clementis*, one of the designated oldest churches in Rome, is located to the southeast of the Flavian amphitheatre or Colosseum and the Ludus Magnus, the major gladiatorial training school. Both complexes were completed during the reign of Domitian. The fourth-century basilica of St. Clement was erected over parts of two earlier but post-Neronian buildings, one a brick structure, perhaps an apartment house that also contained a sanctuary of the god Mithras; the other a large building whose walls are of impressive hewn tufa blocks. This building, only partially excavated, seems to have consisted of small rooms around a large central courtyard, and was probably a warehouse. The altar of the fourth-century church lies directly over one of the rooms in the north wall of the warehouse building, not over a private residence. It is therefore quite possible that the location of the fourth-century church preserves a memory from a century earlier of a simple warehouse room in which Christians met for worship into the third century. Again, there is only circumstantial, but pre-Constantinian, evidence to connect the place with the name of Clement.

The dating of *1 Clement* is based on the assumption of Christianity on the part of Titus Flavius Clemens, along with an oblique reference at the opening of the letter to 'sudden and repeated misfortunes and reverses' in Rome. This reference is often thought to refer to a persecution under Nero (54–68), but this is too far in the past, or under Domitian, enhanced by references in Rev. 1:9; 2:10, 13 and a traditional dating of Revelation during the reign of Domitian. The traditional dating of *1 Clement* is therefore about 96. But recent scholarship has placed in serious doubt any kind of persistent persecution of the church by Domitian, and it has been shown that a reference to recent setbacks as an excuse for not having written sooner is a literary convention. Thus all attempts to date the letter precisely rest on circular and circumstantial evidence (Welborn 1984).

The letter is a carefully constructed argument intended to persuade the Corinthian church that unity is essential to their Christian identity, and that they have placed that unity in jeopardy by ousting the presbyters who had been governing the church and replacing them with another group of leaders.[5] The author first presents examples of how envy and strife placed obstacles in the path of various biblical characters and martyrs, including Peter and Paul (the earliest reference to their martyrdom, 5.4–5). Next, he proposes a long string of biblical examples of obedience and humility, including that of Jesus. His arguments show probable knowledge of 1 Corinthians, Romans and Hebrews, with some Gospel traditions. Arguments with regard to the resurrection and rewards promised to the faithful and from the need for authority and apostolic tradition lead to the climax of the rhetorical strategy: it is therefore not right to remove from their position of moral and liturgical leadership the persons appointed by those who followed in the steps of the apostles (44.3). The leaders of the 'revolt' are therefore urged to submit to the authority of the presbyters (57.1) and all to come to appropriate repentance.

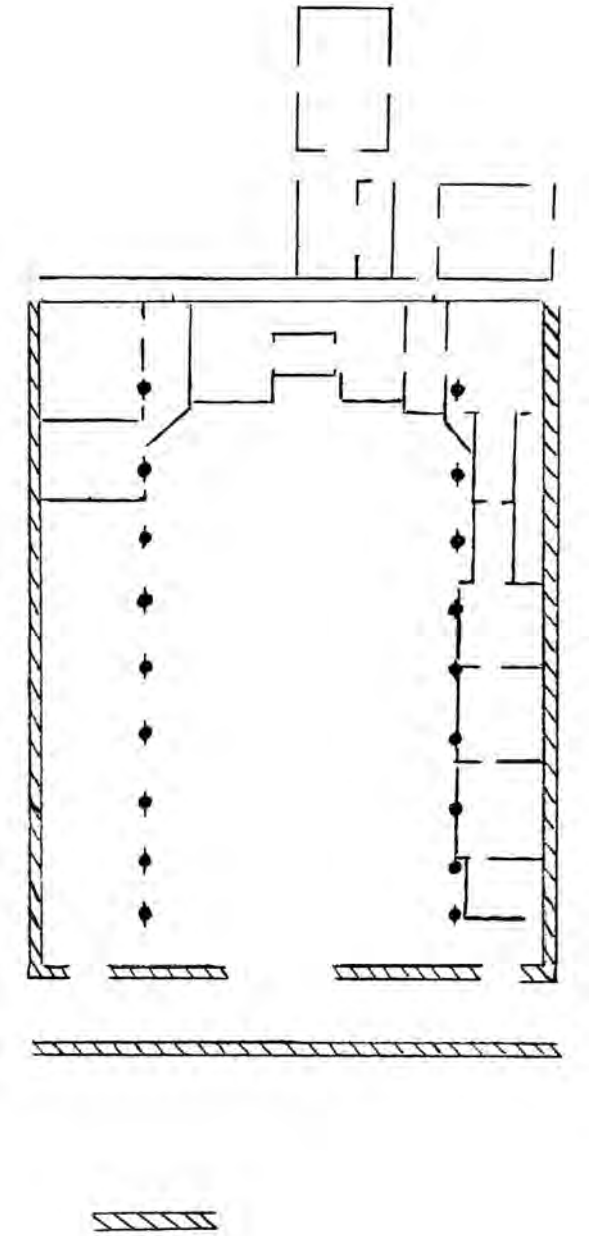

Figure 27.1 Plan of the fourth-century church *Titulus Clementis*, over first/second-century CE buildings. Copyright C. Osiek

1 Clement was enormously influential in succeeding centuries with church authorities who sought to consolidate centralized authority. Attention has been focused on chapter 42, in which the author expresses the beginning of a notion of apostolic succession: God sent Jesus, who gave the Gospel to the apostles, who passed it on to their disciples, appointed by them to be *episkopoi* (overseers or bishops) and *diakonoi* (ministers or deacons; see Phil. 1:1). With creative exegesis of Isa. 60:17 LXX, he argues that these offices were even foreseen by the prophet. Since in 57.1 the principal leaders of the community are *presbyteroi* (presbyters or elders), this title and that of *episkopoi* seem still to have been interchangeable in the churches of the time.

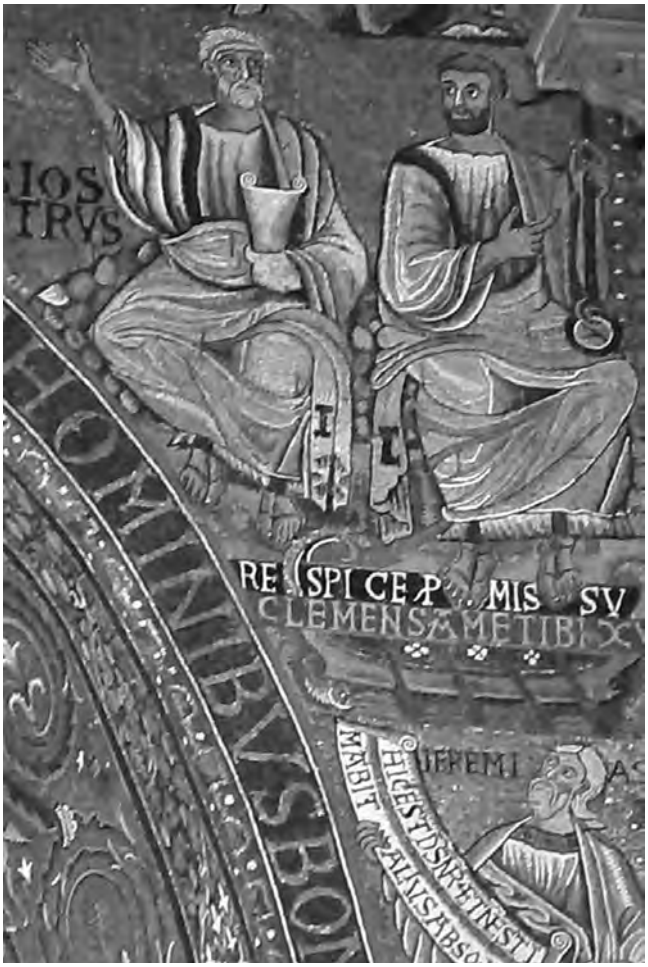

Figure 27.2 Peter and Clement on the main arch of the twelfth-century Basilica of San Clemente, Rome. ©Basilica di San Clemente (Rome). Reproduced courtesy of the Irish Dominican Fathers

It has been suggested that Clement's rather hierarchical and even military notions of the exercise of authority indicate his identification with the ruling class through participation as agent, as a powerful freedman would (Jeffers 1991). His purpose is not to develop a notion of apostolic succession or church authority, but to proclaim and urge the restoration of unity which he sees as absolutely essential to Christian living (Bowe 1988). Later, however, some of his arguments lent themselves nicely to developing hierarchical authority.

The Shepherd of Hermas

The *Shepherd of Hermas*, a book of revelations granted to Hermas in Rome by the agency of two heavenly figures (the first an old woman and the second an angel in the form of a shepherd), was well known and highly valued in the patristic church. Irenaeus, Clement and Origen speak of it in terms that suggest they considered it Scripture. Tertullian appreciated it greatly until his Montanist conversion, after which he could no longer tolerate its offer of a second chance to the repentant. Along with *Barnabas*, it was included toward the end of the Codex Sinaiticus of the New Testament in the fourth century. By the time of Eusebius and Athanasius, it was understood

to be not part of the canon and therefore not to be read publicly, but nevertheless to be beneficial for private reading. *Shepherd* was the most widely read Christian book outside our present biblical canon in the first five centuries of the church. If today *1 Clement* may be the best known of the Apostolic Fathers, *Shepherd* was then.

The whole text is divided into *Visions*, *Mandates* (or Commandments) and *Similitudes* (or Parables). These sectional divisions do not indicate shifts of genre, however, for there are visions and revelations, commandments and symbolic narratives throughout. In general appearance the book is an apocalypse, for it gives accounts of revelatory communications that have to do with human destiny in this world and beyond. The genre of apocalypse has long been disputed for the *Shepherd*, however, since the bulk of the content is allegorical *paraenesis*. In overall form its classification as apocalypse should be maintained, even if it stretches the limits of that genre to the utmost.[6]

The date of writing is uncertain, though the full text was probably written over a long period of time in which it was first proclaimed orally and only then in segments committed to writing. The earliest reference is to Clement who is to copy the message and send it to other churches, because 'that is what he is supposed to do' (*Vis*. 2.4.3). Undoubtedly, Clement the Roman church leader is intended. His role as church secretary fits perfectly with the letter attributed to him. Whether this is an actual contemporary reference to the historical Clement or a literary device to connect Hermas' revelation with a revered but past name is difficult to say. If it is genuine, and *if* the first letter of Clement is to be dated to the end of the first century (which as we have seen is not an airtight argument), then we have here the placement of the first and oldest part of the *Shepherd* around the same time. An outside reference, the Muratorian Canon, seeks to identify Hermas the author with a mid second-century Roman church leader named Pius. The reliability of this reference has also been much debated. If the sections of the book were composed gradually over time as the themes and images were developed and expanded in response to audience participation, it is not impossible that the composition may have spanned as long as thirty or forty years in the first half of the second century.

Provided that the clues to social setting are basically reliable,[7] we know more about the author of the *Shepherd* than about any other author in the Apostolic Fathers collection. According to the text, Hermas was a foundling at Rome, one of the abandoned infants frequently taken in by another family and raised as a slave. He was brought up in a Greek-speaking household, which would have been the case with the majority of lower class families in the capital, and later sold at least once to a woman named Rhoda (a Greek name that possibly indicates her own servile or at least non-Roman origins). Sometime later he was manumitted, either by her or more likely by a later owner, and as a Roman freedman, he was at the time of writing a married householder with grown children, heavily invested in commerce of some kind.[8]

At some point in the course of his adult life, Hermas believed that he had received a vision of great import and the responsibility to communicate it to the whole church of which he was a member, though not an official leader. The original core of that message is probably contained in *Vis*. 1.3. It is a call to change priorities and lifestyles based on the goodness of God the creator and on what God expects. The revelatory agent of the first part, the *Visions*, is an elderly woman who, besides giving oral revelation, shows him the vision of a tower that is being built on water. At the conclusion of the *Visions*, the woman disappears and an angel companion in the form of a shepherd comes to be with him and show him what more he must learn.

The *Mandates* are a body of moral teaching constructed for the most part along the lines of the 'Two Ways' tradition of instruction.[9] They contain the earliest Christian teaching on the discernment of spirits, a discussion of the criteria for true and false prophets, and discussions of the effects of double-mindedness. The third and longest section, the *Similitudes* (longer than both of the other sections combined), contains several distinctive images but is dominated by two: the cosmic willow tree and a recap of the tower. Both are used to illustrate the variety of ways in which believers respond to the call of faith.

Much of the teaching is done through allegory, using detailed examples from the visions. For example, in the first construction of the tower, square white stones that fit perfectly are church leaders alive or dead who ministered well and lived in harmony with one another, while the stones that are broken and thrown away are those who knew the truth but did not remain in it. Those with cracks are those who harbor malice against others, and the stones that are too short believe but have not completely gotten rid of, their evil ways (*Vis*. 3.5.1; 3.6.1–3).

The text teaches through images and parables, like that of the building of the tower (*Vis*. 3, *Sim*. 9.2–9); living in a strange country as an image of earthly existence (*Sim*. 1); the symbiotic agricultural relationship of elm and vine as illustration of how rich and poor are to relate in the church (*Sim*. 2); or the great cosmic willow tree, from which branches are taken and cultivated as illustrations of different ways of receiving and living the word of God (*Sim*. 8). Most of the images seem to come from a Greco-Roman common ground: the female personification of the church as initial revelatory agent, a shepherd as second revelatory agent and companion, the cosmic tree, the elm and vine, the tower, and the mountains of Arcadia.

Yet the *Shepherd* also contains long sections of direct *paraenesis*, moral instruction in virtuous living, mostly in the central section, the *Mandates*, but scattered throughout the full text as well. They rely rather on Hellenistic Jewish moral traditions, often on the 'Two Ways' tradition of illustrating both a negative way ('dark' or 'of death') and a contrasting positive way ('light' or 'of life').

The text shows hardly any interest in Christology. The name of Jesus does not appear, the name Christ only once in a doubtful variant reading at *Vis*. 3.6.6. The Son of God is brought in a few times, in puzzling ways in which he is first easily confused with the Holy Spirit (*Sim*. 5.5), then with the Great Angel who sends the angel-shepherd to be Hermas' guide (*Sim*. 9.12). At one point, the church, the Holy Spirit and the Son of God seem to be one (*Sim*. 9.1.1). The resolution of these confusions is to take each portion of the text on its own merits and not to try to work out a cohesive system in a text that was not written cohesively.

If Christology remains puzzling, ecclesiology in the *Shepherd* is highly developed. The idea of the church as both transcendent symbol and real life collective group with its strengths and weaknesses is very clear. The older woman who first appears to Hermas early identifies herself as the church, yet she interprets for him a vision of the tower being built – which is also the church. The church has both strong and weak members and is in the process of construction. When the tower is completed, the end will come. Yet in the course of the long narrative, the tower is never completed. The woman becomes progressively younger in Hermas' visions and she explains that the reason for this phenomenon is the conversion of church members to more fervent faith life.

The author's chief concern is the call to change of heart on behalf of his community. Their attitude that most troubles him is 'double-mindedness' (see Jas. 4:8; *2 Clement* 19.2) which make people hesitate, doubt and be divided in their loyalties rather than go forward energetically with firm faith. There are many obstacles that lie in the way of such faith. One of the principal ones is too much attention paid to daily and business affairs, and the concern for what others (non-believers) will think to see them associating with lower status persons (e.g. *Vis*. 3.6.2, 5; *Man*. 10.1.4; *Sim*. 8.8.1; 9.20.1). Both of these concerns fit very well what we know of the freedman class in the first centuries of the empire: many were economically very successful and at the same time, in a highly status-conscious society, they were some of the most sensitive to their exclusion from high-status civic positions and to their own striving for status within their own socially limited sphere (Osiek 1983).

Quite in contrast to *1 Clement*, the literary level of the *Shepherd* is not very high, and the text defeats all efforts to discover its complete structure. It is a long, sprawling document that shows signs of many levels of expansion in the form of additions and further thoughts on initial themes. The core of the text was probably formed from pieces of oral narrative, revised and added to many times, and finally put together into a whole text that therefore, understandably, cannot be read for internal cohesion (Osiek 1998). Nevertheless, it was highly appreciated in the early church both because of its imaginative and prophetic symbolism and its solid moral teaching.

The Second Letter of Clement *to the Corinthians*

The *Second Letter of Clement* has nothing in common with *1 Clement*, but thematically comes closer to some parts of the *Shepherd of Hermas*. Yet by the fifth century in parts of the Greek and Syriac traditions, *2 Clement* was attached to *1 Clement* in manuscripts and may even have been considered Scripture in the Syriac Church. It is not at all a letter, but a homily or sermon, perhaps the oldest extant Christian sermon, with the possible exception of the canonical so-called Letter to the Hebrews, a treatise or sermon with a letter ending artificially added (Heb. 13:22–25). Nearly every section of *2 Clement* begins with a hortatory subjunctive 'let us', as the author urges his hearers on to further excitement and commitment in the Christian life. The text seems intended to be proclaimed to a live congregation by a presbyter after the reading of some Scripture passage by a lector (17.3; 19.1). It is possible that the passage just read was Isa. 54:1, which receives lengthy comment in chapter 2. In the same chapter, a saying of Jesus that occurs in all three Synoptic Gospels, 'I came not to call righteous, but sinners' (Matt. 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32) is quoted as *graphē*, the usual term for Scripture or authoritative text. That the cited source is not a saying of the Lord, but rather *graphē*, distinguishes the time of the author from the first generations (contrast for example 1 Cor. 7:10; 9:14).

Time and place of origin are unknown, and *2 Clement* has received little attention from scholars. Four theories of origin have been proposed. Hilgenfeld, Harnack and Goodspeed suggested that it was the letter of Bishop Soter of Rome (*c.* 166–174) to Corinth reported by Eusebius (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.23.11), then kept together with *1 Clement* in the archives where it eventually took on the same name (Lake 1912; Donfried 1973). Many have objected to this theory that in genre the text is really not a letter at all. Lightfoot noticed the references to athletic contests in 7.1–5 and suggested that the sermon was preached in Corinth at the time of the Isthmian games nearby sometime between 120 and 140, eventually winding up, as in the previous thesis, in the archives closely connected with *1 Clement* (Lightfoot and Harmer 1891: 1.2.194–208). It is to be noted that the most prominent use of athletics in the genuine letters of Paul is also addressed to Corinth (1 Cor. 9:24–27). C. Richardson, stressing the anti-gnostic elements in the letter and its quotation from an apocryphal gospel known to have been circulating in Alexandria in the second century,[10] placed its origins in that time and place (Lightfoot and Harmer 1891, ed. by Holmes 1989: 66). Yet a fourth theory of origin is that it is a sermon preached by the reinstated presbyters at Corinth after the argument of *1 Clement* was successfully acted upon there; thus it is to be dated earlier than is usually presumed, 98–100 (Donfried 1973, 1974). For Tuckett, the text is a sermon to an uncertain group of Christians in the context of liturgical prayer (2012: 23–25). While all of the above theories have points to commend them, none has won the support of a majority of scholars. The origins of *2 Clement* remain a mystery.

The text may be divided form-critically into four sections: theological (1–2), ethical (3–14), eschatological (15–18) and conclusion (19–20) (Donfried 1973). The theology and ecclesiology are incarnational, perhaps even anti-gnostic (Donfried 1973, 1974). Here the text draws close to some of the concerns of the *Shepherd of Hermas*. While the church is the assembly of believers, it is also a transcendent feminine reality created before anything else (*2 Clem.* 14.1–2; *Herm. Vis.* 2.4.1). In both texts, the distinction between this preexistent church and Jesus (*2 Clement*) or the Son of God (*Shepherd*) is not totally clear. In an explicit exegesis of Gen. 1:27, with Eph. 5:23–32 lurking in the background, *2 Clement* departs from *Shepherd* by going on to identify male with Christ and female with church, the spiritual church then being revealed in the flesh of Christ. The consequence of this identification is that the flesh must be safeguarded and honoured (here similarity with *Herm. Sim.* 5.6.5–7.4 returns), so that the one who abuses the flesh abuses the church and will not receive the Spirit, who is Christ (14.2–5). Also different from the *Shepherd* is the explicit connection in *2 Clement* of this necessary reverence for the flesh with bodily resurrection (9.1–5).

The Didache

Recent years have seen a burst of interest in the *Didache* or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (Sandt and Flusser 2002; Milavec 2003; Schwiebert 2008; O'Loughlin 2010; Draper and Jefford 2015). It is extant in only one manuscript dated to 1056, discovered in the library of the patriarch of Jerusalem in Constantinople in 1873, and published in 1883. It is the earliest known document of the genre of church order, that is, a compilation of instructions and procedures about community life. The genre was later to grow into the major church order documents of the third and fourth centuries, the *Didascalia* and *Apostolic Constitutions*, for which the *Didache* serves as a literary basis. It is a much earlier document, usually dated to the turn of the first to second century, or perhaps a little earlier (Milavec 2003) and located somewhere in the east, perhaps Syria. Some would see the document as a whole treatise on a community's life (e.g. Milavec 2003), but it is really a composite of three different genres, each section probably having been written separately and later combined with the others by an editor. Chapters 1–6 are a moral instruction in the form of the Two Ways, traceable to Hellenistic Jewish teaching (Sandt and Flusser 2002). Chapters 7–15 are a true church order that gives procedures, first for liturgy and discipline (7–10), and then for reception of itinerant apostles and prophets, and finally for *episkopoi* and *diakonoi* (overseers and ministers; cf. Phil. 1:1) (11–15). Finally, chapter 16 is very different in genre, a mini-apocalypse that stirs to eschatological warning and expectation, with the ultimate enemies, false prophets, to arise from within the community itself. Concern about false teachers and an eschatological perspective, however, are also present in earlier parts of the text (6.1; 11.1).

The document is full of allusions similar to those of the canonical Gospels, most heavily to Matthew, including a version of the Lord's Prayer quite similar to Matthew's, to be prayed three times daily (chapter 8). Knowledge of that Gospel is generally presumed. The Two Ways teaching of chapters 1–6 contains several parallels to *Barnabas* 18–21, probably drawn from a common Jewish ethical teaching source that contains close ties as well to the later *Doctrina Apostolorum* and the earlier *Manual of Discipline* 3:13–4:26 from Qumran.[11] The teaching, prayers and attitude of the document are fundamentally Jewish, in spite of the warning not to fast on Mondays and Thursdays with 'the hypocrites' or pray as they do (8.1–2; cf. Matt. 6:5, 16; 23:13, 15 *passim*). As recent scholarship has recognized in the case of Matthew, this is likely intra-Jewish polemic between a messianic group and their critics rather than Jew vs. Gentile. The *Didache* can be seen as entirely the product of 'Christian' Jews.

The liturgical section (7–10) contains instructions for celebration of baptism and eucharist (using those terms) and for fasting. Three different baptismal formulae are given: 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (7.1), 'in name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit' (without articles, 7.3), and the probably earliest 'in name of (the) Lord' (9.5; cf. Acts 2:38; 8:16; *passim*). Baptism is ideally to be in cold running water, preceded by a fast of one or two days (7).

The formulaic prayer for eucharist has given rise to many speculations about the original form of the dominical eucharistic sayings, since it has no 'words of institution' like the Synoptic and Pauline narratives of the Last Supper. The prayers over cup and bread (in that order)[12] are Jewish blessing prayers, the latter concluding with the eschatological wish that the church might be gathered together in the kingdom (9). The ritual as given here may reflect a very early version of eucharist, an alternative to the Synoptic tradition (Schwiebert 2008), or a combination of agape meal and eucharist as sacred ritual. Whichever it is, the text witnesses to a wider variety of ways of celebrating eucharist in the early church than would be known only from canonical sources.

The structure of leadership in the community is puzzling. There are apostles, prophets and teachers – the three roles named by Paul in 1 Cor. 12:28, but they may not all be distinct, but rather interchangeable titles for the same people, based on the memory of earlier times when these were the most honoured titles of leadership. They seem to be itinerant preachers who visit communities

to share teaching. While all grammatical references to these people are masculine, there is no reason to exclude that some could be women, since we know of female apostles, prophets and teachers in the Pauline churches and later (Rom. 16:7; 1 Cor. 11:5; Acts 18:26; 21:9).

There are established behavioural criteria for discerning the false prophet: ordering a meal 'in the spirit' and eating of it; asking for money and keeping it rather than giving to the needy; not practising what he/she preaches; staying more than three days without working (11.7–13; 12.2). The final chapter of the section on leadership (15) urges that *episkopoi* and *diakonoi* be honoured with respect equal to that of the prophets and teachers. Most commentators assume the itinerant apostle/prophets to be the earlier and recognized leaders, while this community is at the turning point of beginning to establish local, permanent leadership, perhaps exercised by the community patrons, under the titles of *episkopoi* and *diakonoi* (already in place much earlier in Philippi, for example, Phil. 1:1). It has been suggested that the reverse is true, that an established government by *episkopoi* and *diakonoi* is being put into question by the arrival of itinerant prophets (Draper in Jefford 1995: 291–294). However, the passage takes the apologetic offensive to make the point that *episkopoi* and *diakonoi* must be proven to be truthful, not 'lovers of money' because they also do the same ministry as the prophets and teachers. They are therefore not to be disregarded but to be held in equal honour (15.1–2). Clearly the 'overseers and ministers' are the newcomers who must be accepted.

The *Didache* fills in a gap in our knowledge of early church life that we might not even know existed without this text. Without it we would have very little knowledge of how sacramental practice was developing at that early stage, neither would we know the extent of apostolic itinerant forms of leadership beyond the Pauline era or the degree of genuinely Jewish spirituality that remained in early Christianity for a remarkably long time.

The Epistle of Barnabas

If the *Didache* is the work of the Apostolic Fathers that fits most easily within the matrix of Judaism, the *Letter* or *Epistle of Barnabas* is the one most directly engaged with Judaism and most directly and thoroughly in opposition to it. While it is hardly likely that Barnabas the companion of Paul is the author, from earliest traditions (a third-century Latin translation) the text has been ascribed to that name. Nearly all commentators take seriously the reference to the destroyed Temple and a rebuilding in the present by those who destroyed it (16.3–4); most would therefore assign the text to the last years of Hadrian's reign (117–138), when there was apparently some consideration of allowing the Jerusalem Temple to be rebuilt, though Hadrian in the end built a temple to Jupiter on the site in his new city of Aelia Capitolina. Evidence of the episode is elusive, and the reference in *Barnabas* can hardly be to the Temple of Jupiter itself. A quotation from Dan. 7:24 in *Barn*. 4.4 about ten kings followed by a little king who will subdue three of them seems to be taken by the author as prophecy fulfilled in his own day. No matter how commentators try to count emperors, all attempts to make the count come out to Hadrian are unconvincing.

The Greek text was included in the major fourth-century New Testament Codex Sinaiticus just before the *Shepherd of Hermas*, and with it was therefore probably considered Scripture by those who produced the codex. *Barnabas* is not really a letter at all, but a written treatise (17.2) that combines a theological argument (1–17) with a paraenetic instruction according to the Two Ways (18–21), although the literary motif of Two Ways extends throughout the work (Hvalvik 1996).

In the more traditional explicit Two Ways teaching of chapters 18–21, the Way of Light and the Way of Darkness are characterized by types of moral behaviour that are typical of Hellenistic Jewish teaching. The characterization is largely negative; even in the section on the Way of Light, most of the instruction consists not of positive descriptions of virtue but of prohibitions, including condemnations of accepted Greco-Roman practices of pederasty, abortion and infanticide (19.4–5). Some of the material in this section is in literary relationship with passages in the *Didache*. Sorting out the relationship between the two documents has been by way of a long and torturous path, some scholars

Figure 27.3 Restored façade of the second-century Temple of Hadrian at Ephesus. Photo C. Osiek

at one time arguing the priority of one or of the other, but the consensus today is that both share a common Jewish paraenetic source (J. Kloppenborg in Jefford 1995: 88–92).

The more startling part of *Barnabas* is the first seventeen chapters. Here the author practises on the Hebrew Scriptures an allegorical method similar to that of Philo, though no direct influence of Philo can be detected. Probably a common Alexandrian allegorical training lies behind both authors. While Philo accepts cultic observances as part of the genuine meaning of the law, he leads reflection beyond practices to symbolic meaning. Barnabas, on the other hand, bypasses the first level of cultic observance by arguing that it was never meant to be, that the Israelites misunderstood the entire message of the cultic law by observing it ritually. For example, animals forbidden to be eaten are really types of certain kinds of human behaviour which the faithful are to shun (10.3–8). Rather, allegorical interpretation was intended by God from the beginning. Therefore, those who engage in such interpretation are the authentic interpreters and practitioners of the law and the covenant.

It is never explicitly said that 'the former people', are Jews and 'this people' are Christians (13.1) as the two terms are roughly juxtaposed in Ignatius (*Epistle to the Magnesians* 10.3; *Epistle to the Philadelphians* 6.1), but much of the allegory is christological, so there is no question that Christians are involved. Prophetic texts that critique cultic worship are cited as evidence that cult is not necessary. It is possible but not likely that the author simply represents a totally anti-cultic movement within Jewish Christianity. The polemic moves in an anti-Jewish direction. The Son of God came to fill up the sins of those who rejected the prophets (5.11). Their covenant has been broken so that the new covenant of Jesus might be sealed on our hearts (4.8). This author sees his group as quite distinct from Israel and as having superseded it.

The *Letter of Barnabas* is one of the first Christian writings that moves in a direction that was to appear increasingly in the second century, when one of the popular Christian literary genres was the treatise 'against the Jews', written to argue that the claims of Israel have now passed to Christians. The approximately contemporary Ignatius of Antioch would have approved.

The Letters of Ignatius of Antioch

The *Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* are 'a battleground for most of the central issues of the development of early Christianity' (Schoedel 1989: 462). They also have the most complicated manuscript history

of any of the Apostolic Fathers, the collection occurring in three recensions, short, middle and long. The modern scholarly consensus, not without challenges, is that the middle recension of seven letters represents the authentic Ignatius (Schoedel 1985). What we know of him is that he was bishop of Antioch in Syria, condemned to death in the east, brought under guard probably in a group of condemned prisoners to Rome, and there executed *ad bestias* (by wild animals in the amphitheatre) probably under Trajan about 110. Along the way, he was allowed visits from local church members, to whom he then wrote. From Smyrna, he writes back to the churches of Ephesus, Magnesia and Tralles from which he had received emissaries, and forward to the church of Rome to announce the terms of his visit. Later from Troas he writes back to the churches of Philadelphia, Smyrna and a personal letter to the bishop of Smyrna, the famous Polycarp.

While in earlier times a collegial group alternately called *episkopoi* ('overseers') or *presbyteroi* ('elders') governed a local church, here in each of the communities to which Ignatius wrote (with the exception of Rome), as in his own church at Antioch, a single leader called an *episkopos* has emerged, assisted by presbyters and deacons. For the first time, that term can be understood as 'bishop' with a meaning roughly equivalent to its meaning today. The notable exception to this pattern was Rome, for neither in *1 Clement*, nor in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, nor in Ignatius' *Letter to the Romans* is there any indication of other than the older style of collegial government there, and it is not until the last part of the second century that there is concrete evidence the Roman leadership structure has changed.

'We do not often see life from the prisoner's point of view in antiquity' (Schoedel 1985: 11). To Ignatius, his journey in captivity was like 'fighting wild animals', the military guards like leopards, giving worse treatment in exchange for kindness (*Rom.* 6.1). Yet he was able to think clearly through a number of issues. One of Ignatius' many concerns in most of his letters is that believers submit to the authority of the bishop and his presbyters (*Eph.* 6.1 (to the bishop as to the Lord himself); *Magn.* 13.2; *Trall.* 7.2; *Phil.* 7; *Smyrn.* 8; *Pol.* 6). What is not known is whether this form of governance was already well in place throughout Asia Minor where he was passing, or whether only in specific churches in communion with his own church of Antioch, or whether Ignatius is actively promulgating this form of church government in other churches as he travels west. When he writes to Rome, not only does he make no mention of current church leaders there, referring only to the memory of the apostles Peter and Paul,[13] but he also does not seek to foster the formation of any such leadership structures. Ignatius has no authority in Rome, where he comes begging them not to try to interfere in his martyrdom. By contrast, he does seem to have held at least the authority of a revered figure in the other churches to which he writes.

Figure 27.4 Second-century floor mosaic from Antioch depicting the evil eye attacked by various apotropaic instruments, from the Mosaic Museum. Photo by C. Osiek

Figure 27.5 Peristyle of a luxurious first- to second-century house in Ephesus; Terrace House B. Photo C. Osiek

Ignatius has two objectionable movements in mind, against which he speaks out forcibly, though it is also possible that each is an aspect of the other. One is the apparent desire of some gentile Christians in Philadelphia to adopt Jewish practices or beliefs. It must have been enticing to gentile converts taught through the Hebrew Scriptures to 'go all the way' into fuller Jewish observances, but Ignatius uses the strongest language up to his time in his denunciation of this tendency: 'It is better to hear Christianity from a circumcised man than Judaism from an uncircumcised one' (*Phil.* 6.1). He stands at that turning point in the relationship between Israel and the church in which the new movement turns its back on its roots, yet more and more claims their inheritance. In the absence of Jewish influence, his language of mystery cults and divine union suggests Greco-Roman religion as the preferred basis (Brent 2006, 2007).

His other and greater objection is to the denial of the reality of the full incarnation of Christ, or 'docetism'. The major issue for Ignatius is principally denial of his suffering and death, seen as the means of our redemption and resurrection (*Trall.* 10.1; *Smyrn.* 2–3). Without Christ's suffering and death, Ignatius believes his own would have no meaning. The threat is immediate and personal. Instead, he awaits being devoured by animals as God's wheat ground into the pure bread of Christ (*Rom.* 4.1). He was prepared to die, he wanted to die, and die he did.

Ignatius' younger friend Polycarp became one of the most revered figures of the early church. Born about 70, he was reputed to have been a disciple of John at Ephesus.[14] Irenaeus, later to become bishop of Lyons in Gaul, had known Polycarp when Irenaeus was a child. Polycarp became bishop at Smyrna early in the second century. At the age of about 40, he already held this position when Ignatius passed through western Asia Minor on the way to his death in Rome about 110. Besides writing a letter to the Christian community of Smyrna, as he did in the case of others he visited, Ignatius also wrote an extant personal letter to its bishop, Polycarp. This letter contains advice about various points of church administration in the areas of his dealings with widows, slaves[15] and celibates[16] among others. It enjoins Polycarp to encourage wives and husbands toward mutual love (with no language of submission!),[17] and the bishop should consent to their marriage (5.2). The letter is not quite totally private, however, for 6.1–7.1 gives instructions in the second person plural toward obedience to church leaders and mutual harmony.

The Letter of Polycarp

From Polycarp, one letter is extant, which may in fact be a composite of two letters.[18] The *Letter of Polycarp* was written to the Philippian community, presumably at their request (3.1). The distance from Smyrna to Philippi across the north Aegean Sea was about a one-week journey by sea, and these two churches may have had regular contact. We have no letter of Ignatius to the Philippians, but there may be circumstantial evidence that he passed through: the city is on the direct route along the Via Egnatia that Ignatius must have taken to Rome from Troas (Figure 27.6), his last recorded

Figure 27.6 Section of the Via Egnatia alongside the forum of Philippi and looking east, showing wheel grooves worn in the stone. Photo Philip F. Esler

location; and he is mentioned twice by Polycarp in the letter, first (9.1) as an example 'that you have seen with your eyes', then several times in the final chapter, as one who with them wished to send letters to Syria, while they wished to have copies of Ignatius' letters to other churches (13.1, 2).

The *Letter of Polycarp* is a good example of the adaptation of the New Testament household code, with its instructions to various household members about their mutual obligations, to the context of the church as extended household. Already observable in the Pastoral Epistles, this literary adaptation gives instructions to various members of the church. The androcentric perspective of the household codes remains, so that leading men are giving directions to the rest. Thus we (male leaders) should teach 'ourselves' to follow the Lord's commands (4.1), then 'our' wives and widows (4.2–3), then deacons, young men, and virgins or young women (5.2–3). Finally, presbyters are admonished about their duties in 6.1. This format gives us a valuable insight into the way that the church was becoming a tight-knit society that could make the same claims on its members that kinship systems would make. Already at work in the Synoptic Gospels, this tendency became stronger rather than weaker in the second century.

The Martyrdom of Polycarp

Polycarp is best known not from his brief letter but from the account of his martyrdom that happened at Smyrna probably in 155 or 156, or perhaps as late as 167 (Lightfoot and Harmer 1891, ed. by Holmes 1989: 131–132) when he was eighty-six years old. The *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, though substantially reworked with theological themes, is our oldest Christian martyrdom account and is at its core undoubtedly authentic (see the history of scholarship by Dehandshutter in Gregory and Tuckett 2005b). Originally written as a letter from the church of Smyrna to that of Philomelium in Phrygia (prescript), the text soon became widely known. The testimony now found at the end of the manuscripts indicates the importance assigned to it in antiquity by those who reverenced the memory of Polycarp. There are several obvious additions, chapters 21–22, giving among other things the exact day of his death, 23 February (but not the year), and part of the manuscript's history: copied by one Gaius from Irenaeus' papers, then again from Gaius by Socrates of Corinth, then again by one

Figure 27.7 Roman agora of Smyrna (modern Izmir), restored after earthquake damage in 178 CE. Photo C. Osiek

Pionius of Smyrna, possibly to be identified with a martyr of the same name during the persecution of Decius in the middle of the third century. Eusebius paraphrases or quotes nearly the whole text (*H.E.* 4.15–46).

The account is a keystone in the shaping of the heroic tradition of the martyr. It is composed in such a way as to configure the sufferings of Polycarp to those of Christ. Yet intriguing details emerge. A dream vision of his pillow on fire tells him that he will be burnt alive (5). When the authorities come to arrest him late in the day, he orders a meal to be served to them while he has time to pray (7). During his public trial, when asked to renounce Christ, he says that he cannot renounce one he has served for eighty-six good years (9). The play on 'atheism' in the encounters of Christians and their world is brought out: while Christians consider others atheists for denying the one true God, the others consider Christians atheists for denying their gods (9.2). Yet miraculous elements are also present: when Polycarp's lifeless body is stabbed, out of it comes a dove and enough blood to quench the fire (16.1). The cooperation of Jews in doing away with him is strongly presented (12.2; 13.1; 17.2; 18.1). This first martyrdom account set the stage for many directions that were just beginning: the glorification of martyrdom, Christian anti-Judaism and the use of miraculous stories in the accounts of saints' lives and deaths.

Conclusion

The Apostolic Fathers represent just the beginning of what post-New Testament Christian literature was to become. In their diversity, these writers allow us to glimpse some of the ways in which Christianity was becoming enculturated in its world, while at the same time creating for itself a new identity that was eventually to be a primary factor in the transformation of that same world.

Notes

1 The first two editions of the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (1958, 1974) remarked contemptuously that although 'full of reminiscences of the NT, they are on an altogether lower spiritual level'. The editors of later editions, F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (1997, 2005) have thought better of that judgement.

2 J. B. Cotelier is usually credited with being the first user of the term in his *Patres, qui temporibus Apostolicis floruerunt* (1672), but the credit should probably go to an archbishop of Canterbury, William Wake (1657–1737) with his prior use of 'Apostolical Fathers' (De Jonge 1978; Schoedel 1989).

3 For the texts, with introduction, discussion and bibliography, see originally Lightfoot and Harmer 1891, updated by Michael Holmes for the second edition of 1989; more recently, Ehrman 2003 and Holmes 2007. Jefford 2005 and Pratscher 2010 provide summaries of contents, discussion and bibliography.

4 In the early empire, the *tria nomina* system was used by free Roman citizen males, whereby they had a *praenomen* or personal name (Titus), a *nomen* of family name (Flavius) and an additional name, a *cognomen* (Clemens). The freedman usually took the *praenomen* and *nomen* of his former owner and new patron, and used his own personal slave name as a *cognomen*. Thus a hypothetical freed slave of Titus Flavius Clemens named Eutyches would become Titus Flavius Eutyches, not Clement. The *cognomen* was more widely used even by those with no affinity. Nothing, therefore, can be proved certainly about the connection of a writer named Clement to this aristocratic family.

5 Most commentators assume on the basis of *1 Clem.* 3.3 ('the young [rose up] against the old') that the Corinthian 'young Turks' have ousted the old guard in a generational coup, but the passage is part of a rhetorical cliché and must not be taken literally (Bowe 1988: 18–19).

6 The text meets the criteria for apocalyptic genre established by Collins 1979; cf. Osiek 1986.

7 Commentators have had various assessments of the historicity of biographical references, from total acceptance to the judgement that they are used allegorically to refer to the whole community (Dibelius 1923), to cautious optimism about the integration of personal details and literary motifs (Brox 1991), to total doubt that they are anything more than the literary strategy of the author (Peterson 1959). Cf. Osiek 1999: 18–24.

8 *Vis.* 1.3.1; 2.3.1; *Man.* 3.5; specifically of Hermas; more generally, *Vis.* 3.11.3; *Man.* 10.1.4–5; *Sim.* 4.5, 7; 8.8.1–2 passim; Osiek 1983. An interesting possible model for Hermas is Lucius Caecilius Jucundus, son of a freedman at Pompeii, owner of a spacious house, whose business records included 137 sales receipts and 16 rental receipts in a wooden chest.

9 A Jewish moral tradition widespread in the Hellenistic and Roman period; cf. Kraft 1965: 4–16; extensive discussion and bibliography in Osiek 1999, Introduction 3.3.
10 12.2: 'When the two will become one, and the outside as the inside, and the male with the female neither male nor female' (then the kingdom will come). Clement of Alexandria attributes the saying to the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, of which only such fragments quoted in other authors are known. The same saying appears in *Gospel of Thomas* 23 from Nag Hammadi. It is interesting to note that *2 Clement* quotes the saying favourably and exegetes it for the rest of the chapter.
11 For further references and bibliography, see Schoedel 1989: 467–468.
12 The order cup-bread also appears in 1 Cor. 10:16–17 and Luke 22:17–18 in the Western text, with the order cup-bread-cup in the majority of manuscripts. For discussion of this text-critical problem, see Fitzmyer 1985: 1388–1389.
13 *Rom*. 4.3. After *1 Clem*. 5.4–5, this is the second earliest mention of the tradition connecting these two apostles with Rome.
14 So Irenaeus, quoted by Eusebius *H.E*. 5.20.5. There were a number of traditions about 'John', most eventually connected with Ephesus: John son of Zebedee, John the evangelist, John the presbyter (probably a different person, author of the Letters of John), and the named author of Revelation (Rev. 1:9). Later tradition tended to fuse them all into one figure.
15 Ignatius *Pol*. 4.3 tells Polycarp not to treat slaves arrogantly but, like all Christian literature of the time, takes the institution of slavery for granted. Slaves are to continue in their service and not to expect the church to post the money for them to buy their freedom – an intriguing insight into how slavery worked in the church at this time. See Harrill 1993.
16 Ignatius *Pol*. 5.2 instructs that anyone wishing to remain celibate (literally, *en hagneia*, 'innocent') 'out of reverence for the flesh of the Lord' should do so privately, making his or her intention known only to the bishop. This is one of the earliest references to the practice of deliberate and prolonged Christian celibacy.
17 It is characteristic of the Christian literature of this period, with one exception (*1 Clem*. 1.3) that the submission of wives to husbands, so prevalent in the later New Testament (Col. 3:18; Eph. 5:22–24; 1 Pet. 3:1–6), disappears. The language of submission remains, but it is now directed to all church members in their submission to church authority.
18 The final two chapters (13–14) sound as if they were written at a prior time, when Ignatius had just left and Polycarp is anxious to hear news of him. Yet earlier in the letter, Ignatius seems to be a revered figure consigned with Paul among past heroes (9.1). Many scholars have suggested that chapters 13–14 were written first but added later to an earlier letter, resulting in what we now have. There is by no means consensus on this question (Lightfoot and Harmer 1989).

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28
THE APOLOGISTS

Anders-Christian Jacobsen

In this chapter, I will first give a short definition of whom I include in the group of early Christian Apologists and give a short description of these.[1] Afterward, I will discuss the addressees of apologetic texts, the motive of defence and its relation to identity formation, some apologetic strategies and, finally, the most common motives in apologetic treatises.

Apologies and Apologists: a brief definition

Apologists can be found in many cultural, political and religious settings. Of concern to us in this context are the Christian Apologists from the second and the first half of the third centuries CE. This group can be defined in many different ways depending on the chosen criteria. In my opinion, we cannot identify or define apologetic texts as a specific literary genre based on, e.g. form or addressees.[2] Instead, we must take as a starting point the meaning of ἀπολογία (*apologia*) in Greek. Whereas in English everyday use, an apology is mostly used as an expression of regret, the Greek word meant an oral or written speech of defence or justification. Thus, the primary criterion in this chapter for being included in the group of Apologists from this period is the necessity to have written a treatise whose main aim is to refute accusations (real or portrayed) raised against Christians by non-Christians – and thus to defend the Christians against these charges. This definition excludes persons and treatises that defend accusations against, for example, Judaism or Greek and Roman philosophy and religion. It also excludes treatises that only refute accusations against Christians and Christianity as a minor side effect. Finally, it also excludes authors of treatises who participate in internal Christian polemic and conflicts. This leads us to include the following authors among the Christian Apologists from the second and the first half of the third centuries CE: Aristides, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Tertullian, Minucius Felix and Origen.[3]

Little is known about the life of Aristides, but it is fairly certain that he lived in second-century Athens where he practised philosophy, both before and after his conversion to Christianity. He probably died around 133–134 CE. Aristides' *Apology* was probably composed between 120 and 130 and is the oldest of the apologies to be treated here.[4] In his text, Aristides first divides humankind into four categories – Barbarians, Greeks, Jews and Christians. He then presents his interpretation of these categories and their religious beliefs and practices and concludes, not surprisingly, that the Christians are superior to the others. Finally, he requests that the emperor, Hadrian, stops persecuting the Christians and converts to Christianity.

Justin Martyr was born into a pagan family in Flavia Neapolis (modern Nablus), in Samaria, around 100 CE and lived until 165 (see Figure 28.1). After having attended a number of different philosophical schools, he eventually encountered and converted to Christianity. Two of his apologies (usually referred to as *First* and *Second Apology*) have been preserved. The first is addressed to Antoninus Pius, who was emperor between 138 and 161. In this apology, Justin first argues that the legal treatment of the Christians is absurd and wrong, and he urges the emperor to change this situation. He then describes the teaching of Jesus and tries to prove that Jesus was the son of God by using texts from the Old Testament. The second apology was probably originally part of the first apology. In this, Justin discusses the Christian martyrs, demons as well as eschatological themes.[5]

Tatian was born in Assyria (most likely) and travelled to Rome where he after his conversion to Christianity became the pupil of Justin Martyr.[6] Before his death in 185, he wrote, among other texts, a treatise called *Oratio ad Graecos*, probably between 155 and 170. As the title reveals, the treatise is addressed to the Greeks, but without further specification. Tatian's overall message is that Christianity in all respects is superior to Greek religion and philosophy.[7]

In a preserved fragment, Athenagoras introduces himself as an 'Athenian, Philosopher and Christian' (*Codex Parisinus Graecus 451*), but apart from the knowledge that he lived in the second century, this is more or less all that we know of him. Athenagoras was the author of a treatise entitled *Embassy for the Christians* or – with its Latin title – *Legatio pro Christianis*. It seems most likely that the treatise was written between 176 and 180 CE and that it was addressed to the Roman emperors Marcus Aurelius and his son Commodus. The main charges against which Athenagoras defends the Christians are atheism, incest, promiscuity and cannibalism.[8]

Theophilus was a patriarch of Antioch and lived until *c.* 184. He seems to have converted to Christianity after reading the scriptures, but other facets of his life are not mentioned in the writings. His only extant work is the treatise *Ad Autolycum*, which was named after the text's addressee, Autolycus. He was a learned pagan with whom Theophilus, according to the text, had had conversations about the truth of Christianity. Autolycus was not convinced, however, for which reason Theophilus decided to address a treatise to him containing arguments for the fallacy of Greek religion and the truth of Christianity. These arguments include a number of the common apologetic *topoi*

Figure 28.1 Nablus, Samaria, the birthplace of Justin. From a lithograph in Keightley (1883: 114)

Figure 28.2 The Roman Forum in the eighteenth century. Etching by Giambattista Piranesi, from *Vedute di Roma Disegnate ed Incise da Giambattista Piranesi, Architetto Veneziano*, died 1778

but also quite a long interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis, which is not something we find in other apologetic texts. The treatise is written after 180.[9]

Tertullian lived from *c.* 160–220 in Carthage in the Latin North Africa (where he would have almost certainly used the Baths of Antoninus (Figure 28.4)), and his conversion most likely took

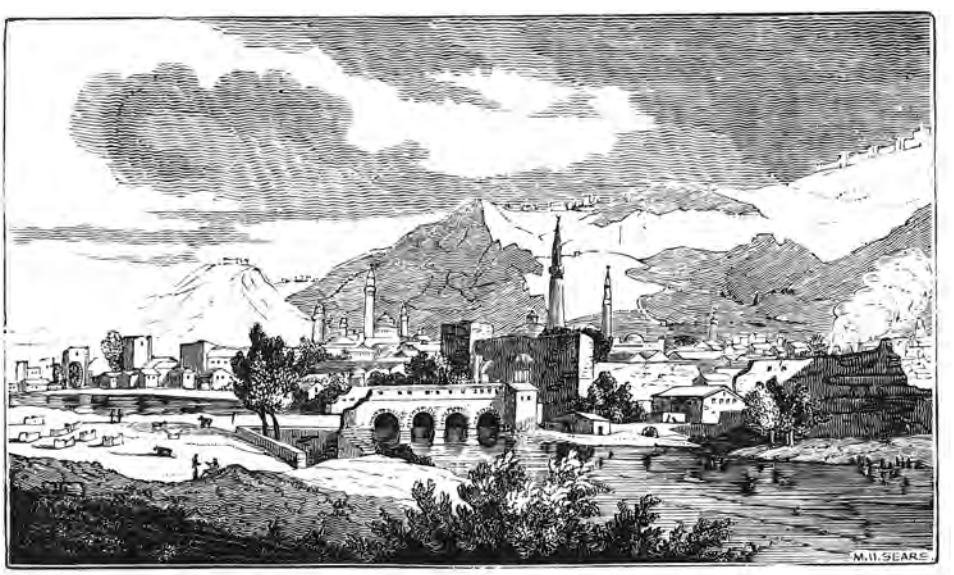

Figure 28.3 A nineteenth-century lithograph of Antioch-on-the-Orontes. From Lortet (1884: 199)

place towards the end of the second century. He wrote many – still extant – texts, but one of the most important is his *Apologeticum* written just before 200 (probably 197). In this treatise, Tertullian touches upon many common apologetic themes, such as criticizing the Roman legislation, denying that Christians commit secret crimes and defending the Christians against charges of not paying proper and due attention to the divine and to the emperor.

We have very few facts about the life of the Latin author Minucius Felix, but it seems quite certain that he lived in Rome and died around 250 CE. He has left us a text called *Octavius*, after the main character of the treatise. The treatise cannot be dated with any kind of precision, but according to most modern researchers, it is written after Tertullian's *Apologeticum* from around 197. The narrative setting of *Octavius* is three friends taking a leisurely walk along the Tiber from Rome to Ostia. During the walk, Octavius – being a Christian – argues so strongly for the superiority of Christianity over and against the absurdities of polytheism that Caecilius converts to Christianity.

Origen, who lived from 185 (when he was born into a Christian family) to 253/54, was the latest of the theologians whom I count in the group of early Christian Apologists. He was the author of numerous dogmatic and exegetical texts and commentaries, but his text *Against Celsus* is the only apologetic text he wrote. This was written around 248 and was aimed at refuting a text by Celsus against Christians (*The True Discourse*) from *c.* 170. From Origen's long and detailed treatise *Against Celsus*, we get a very good impression of the debate between Christians and non-Christians in the second half of the second century as well as a valuable insight into what the problems and solutions were in the eyes of probably the most important theologian of the third century. The overall argument in Origen's treatise *Against Celsus* is that Christianity had morally improved the lives of Christian converts, a fact which, to Origen, proves both the validity of Jesus' mission and the value of Christian doctrines.

Figure 28.4 Ruins of the Baths of Antoninus from ancient Carthage, constructed 145–165 CE. Wikimedia Commons: photo by Bernard Gagnon

Addressees

With a few exceptions, Christian Apologists explicitly addressed readers outside the group to which they belonged – typically, the Roman authorities, e.g. the emperors, or the Apologists' Greek friends, etc. Justin, for example, addressed his apologies to the emperor Antoninus Pius; Tatian addressed his treatise to 'Greek men'; Athenagoras addressed his writing to Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Aurelius Commodus, who are called philosophers; and Theophilus' treatise is dedicated to the pagan Autolycus. The question is, however, whether these writings, in reality, were addressed to these authorities and individuals and to them alone.

In the early period of modern scholarship, these explicit addressees were most often taken also to be the implied addressees. Thus, in the introduction to G. Krüger's edition of Justin's apologies (1904), it is simply taken for granted that Justin's treatises are addressed to the emperor. Moreover, in the introductory note to the translation of Justin's apologies in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, it is stated that, 'He [Justin] tells the professional philosophers on a throne how false and hollow is all wisdom that is not meant for all humanity and that is not capable of leavening the masses'.[10] The addressee is thus taken to be the emperor. Further, B. Altaner claims without any discussion or differentiation that the Christian apologies from the second century were written for the emperors.[11]

As these examples demonstrate, we do not find any discussions about whether or not the explicit readers are also the implied readers in many early scholarly books. But we also find examples from the early modern scholarly literature on early Christian apologetics where the straightforward identity of the addressees is questioned. This is, for instance, the case when O. Bardenhewer states, 'Die Verteidigungsschriften der Christen sind durchweg an eine heidnische Adresse gerichtet, wenngleich dieselben ihre Leser jedenfalls von Anfang an zumeist in christlichen Kreisen gesucht und gefunden haben' (Christians' defence writings are all addressed to pagan addresses, although they from the very beginning sought and found most readers in Christian circles).[12] Similarly, Quasten introduces his chapter on the second-century Christian Apologists with the words:

> Whereas the works of the Apostolic Fathers and of early Christianity were directed to the guidance and edification of the faithful, with the Greek Apologists the literature of the Church addresses itself for the first time to the outside world and enters the domain of culture and science.[13]

This is true insofar as the Apologists also aimed at convincing an audience extending beyond the explicit addressees – for example, philosophically educated Greeks in general – but as I will argue later, Christians themselves were most likely a main part of the Apologists' targeted audiences.

The suspicion that the explicitly mentioned addressee was, in fact, not the (only) implied reader is obviously strengthened by the observation that in some cases, this simply cannot have been the case. Thus, in Origen's mid third-century text *Against Celsus* it is obvious – to the readers and to the author, Origen – that the explicit addressee, Celsus, would never read the treatise because he was long dead when Origen wrote his treatise against him (cf. *C. Cels. praef.* 4). Neither is *Contra Celsum* directed at Celsus' cultural, religious or philosophical heirs; it is rather directed at the weak Christians who were affected by the critique raised by Celsus, as is clear from *C. Cels. praef.* 4:

> But nevertheless, since in the multitude of those who are considered believers some such persons might be found as would have their faith shaken and overthrown by the writings of Celsus, but who might be preserved by a reply to them of such a nature as to refute his statements and to exhibit the truth, we have deemed it right to yield to your injunction, and to furnish an answer to the treatise which you sent us, but which I do not think that anyone, although only a short way advanced in philosophy, will allow to be a *True Discourse*, as Celsus has entitled it.

In such cases, the implicit readers were obviously other Christians, and the function of apologetics was to strengthen the accused group itself.

In recent research on apologetics, the widespread straightforward identification between explicit and implied addressees has been increasingly questioned, and many scholars now realize that the implied readers of apologetic texts were, in fact, persons belonging to the author's own grouping. M. Fiedrowicz basically holds that early Christian apologetics were provoked from the outside and considers non-Christians to be the main addressees of early Christian apologetics. He is, however, aware that Christians also read the early Christian apologies and that an additional function of these texts, therefore, was to provide Christians with arguments against their non-Christian critics.[14] M. Edwards *et al.* even suggest that, in fact, not many others than Christians have read the apologetic treatises, a suggestion stemming from their judgement that the content and the style were not inviting for others than Christians.[15] Thus, it is highly probable that the writings also had a function within the Christian community because they could provide Christians with arguments which they could use when forced to explain and defend themselves. Indeed, Philip Esler has argued that where early Christian writings of this sort really had a Christian, rather than an outsider audience in view, the terms 'apology' or 'apologetic' are inappropriate in relation to them and it makes better sense to see them, to use the sociology of knowledge of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, as exercises in 'legitimation', that is, as attempts to *explain and justify* Christianity to Christian insiders (Esler 1987: 205–211).

In recent research on early Christian apologetic literature, we also find advocates for the opinion that early Christian apologetic texts were directed at a wider non-Christian audience with the aim of softening their view on Christianity and Christians or maybe even converting them to Christianity. Later, I will argue along these lines showing that Minucius Felix' *Octavius* could be seen as an example of how Christians could argue to convince non-Christians that Christianity is the only true religion. It is also possible that the texts could be addressed to a wider non-Christian audience directly aiming at converting these to Christianity.

Thus, to sum up, the texts themselves were usually directly addressed to those who have raised charges against the group represented by the Apologist – almost exclusively one or more non-Christians. But it is important to bear in mind that the explicitly mentioned addressees were rarely the only (or even main) ones, as was usually assumed in early scholarship.

The aim of apologetic texts: defence and identity

As mentioned above, texts must include elements of defence in order to be counted as apologetic texts. Consequently, a text must also answer to some kind of attack to be labelled apologetic. These attacks could be explicit or implicit, they could be real or constructed by the author himself, and they were countered by the Apologist by presenting Christianity in a positive light and, conversely, by portraying (some of) the views of the opponents in a negative light. This classical understanding of apologetic texts as defensive is reproduced in most ancient and newer scholarship and is supported by numerous primary sources. A few examples will illustrate this.

In his *Legatio*, Athenagoras says, 'They bring three charges against us: atheism, Thyestian banquets and Oedipean unions' (*Leg.* 3.1), adding a little later that he 'shall now meet each charge separately' (4.1). Even if the word *apologia* (ἀπολογία) is not used here, it is quite clear that Athenagoras' aim is to defend Christians against very concrete charges. As a part of his defence, he attacks Greek religious traditions, such as the use of material images of gods in the cult (15.1–30.6). He also explains elements of Christian teaching, for example, the monotheistic idea of God (10.1–5).

In Justin's first apology, the entire setup is defensive: Justin addresses the emperor because he wants him to protect Christians against legal injustice (1 *Apol.* 1–12) and charges for immorality, atheism, etc. (13–60). Like Athenagoras, Justin also attacks ideas from Greek religion (e.g. the Greek demonology) and explains concrete elements in Christian teaching, such as the idea of resurrection.[16]

A final example of primary sources similarly illustrates the defensive aim of the apologies. Thus, in the preface to *Contra Celsum*, Origen makes it clear that he is undertaking an apology for Christianity, using the words ἀπολογία and ἀπολογέομαι several times. It is also interesting to note that Origen discusses the best way to make an apology – is it in writing or by way of life (*C. Cels. praef.* 1–2)? Similarly, the fact that he describes the weak Christians as the intended addressees is informative (*C. Cels. praef.* 4), since apologies were usually explicitly addressed to readers outside the Christian community. Thus, Origen's choice to name Christians as the addressees underlines that an essential characteristic of apologies was defence – no matter who the addressee was.

As mentioned above, this classical understanding of apologetic texts as essentially defensive is found in most older and newer scholarship. Thus, A. Von Harnack states in his chapter on the Apologists in his book *Dogmengeschichte*, that the Apologists' aim was to maintain (*behaupten*) the Christianity confessed by the Christian congregations.[17] This term 'maintain' in itself signals a strong element of defence, since the act of maintaining implies both an active explanation of the current situation as well as an act of defence against threats that will disturb this position. He further states that the Apologists' preferred way of maintaining Christianity was to combine the Christian idea of revelation with the idea of rationality characteristic of Greek philosophy, i.e. a theme well-known and beloved of most of the Apologists' opponents.[18] Accordingly, the Apologists did not defend Christianity by opposing all Greek ideas but by usurping and reinterpreting basic ideas from Greek philosophy, which on the other hand – according to the Apologists – in the Greek tradition itself had been darkened (*verdunkelt*) because the philosophers were controlled by demons.[19] The Apologists' defence of Christianity thus also included a positive explanation, directed towards the attackers (and most likely other Christians), of what Christianity was in the view of the Apologists. We will return to this aspect later.

This main classic assertion – that apologetics were primarily a defensive response to outsiders' attacks – is also found in newer scholarly books. Thus, one of the most important books on the Apologists, *Apologetics in the Roman Empire* (Edwards *et al.* 1999), is introduced with the words, 'The adherents of these religions attacked each other with great ferocity at times. In response, there emerged the practice of apologetic, the defence of a religion against actual or perceived opponents'.[20] Moreover, according to the author of another book on apologetics from 2000, Fiedrowitcz, one consequence of the fact that in its earliest years, the church was 'kerygmatisch-missionarisch orientiert' (oriented towards preaching and mission) was that it was met with all kinds of criticisms from people who had heard about Christianity, but who were not convinced of what they had heard.[21] This is indeed a classical definition of the *Sitz im Leben* of early Christian apologetics.

However, it is obvious that many of these apologetic texts, which are characterized by their defensive elements, also have a very offensive character. In antiquity and late antiquity, Christians were situated in a context where they had to define and defend their beliefs and ways of life as a response to many kinds of criticism and attacks. Similarly, at that time, Christian groups had no clear-cut definition of these beliefs and ways of life, and their religious and cultural identities were constantly under construction. And apologetics must be regarded as part of these processes of self-definition and definition of others. Thus, when a religious community defends and presents its own ideas against external criticism, this group simultaneously embarks on the process of self-definition and self-construction. This explains why a typical trait of the apologetic texts is that they reject criticism and, at the same time, present a positive description of their own ideas. Such positive portrayals of Christianity are found in many apologetic texts – even in Tertullian, who is arguably the most negative of all the Apologists.

In Tertullian's *Apologeticum*, we find the following sentence: 'I shall at once go on, then, to exhibit the peculiarities of the Christian society that, as I have refuted the evil charged against it, I may point out its positive good' (39.1). This sentence is part of a lengthy argument, which runs through chapters 36 to 45. In these passages, Tertullian rejects accusations made against the Christians that they are disloyal towards the emperor and the Roman empire. He argues that the

enemies of the emperor are to be found among the Romans themselves, whereas the Christians are loyal and positive towards both the emperor and the empire. The argumentative strategy was thus, first, to reject the negative charges and, subsequently, to create a positive image of Christians and Christianity in place of the negative.

In Justin's first apology, we find the same combination of defence against accusations and positive descriptions of Christianity; in fact, this form of argument structures the whole of Justin's text. In chapters 1–12, he deals with the illegality of the processes against the Christians and refutes the accusations of atheism, immorality and the alleged disloyalty to the Roman empire. Chapters 13–67 demonstrate the superiority of Christianity concerning morals, teaching, worship and communal life. Justin concludes his treatise with a positive description of the Christian worship and the life in a Christian community (61–67). Hence, in early Christian apologetic writings, positive descriptions of the dogmatic and ethical content of Christianity seem to be as important as the negative rejections of accusations and charges raised against the Christians.

As we saw above, the classical understanding of apologetic texts as primarily defensive in character is still found in recent books, but the view that a positive construction of identity is a very important part of the apologetic endeavour plays an increasingly larger role among recent scholars.[22] Surely, defence is still – and wisely so – regarded as a main characteristic of apologetics, but it has been stressed by several researchers that the defence against attacks from outsiders – real or invented – was also directed inwards as a way to strengthen members of the attacked group. Thus, as argued by J. Engberg, one of the more important functions of the conversion accounts found in apologetic texts was to inspire other Christians in their conversion processes, not (merely) to convince outsiders to convert.[23] In addition, what the Apologists sometimes did was to create images of 'the others' that they could next attack as a way to establish and maintain an identity for themselves and for their communities.[24] In reality, the religious identities were fluent at that time, but what the Apologists did was to construct fixed identities out of these many fluent identities – and it was these fixed identities that the Apologists could subsequently attack or defend. This shift in the understanding of how the making of identities internally among the Christian groups took place is very important, but the fact that apologetics and apologies deal with attack, defence and explanation still holds true.

Apologetic strategies

Related to the topic of aim is the question of apologetic strategies. When dealing with strategies in apologetic texts, we must differentiate between explicit and implicit strategies. Tertullian's *Apologeticum* is a good example of a text that explicitly describes the strategy that the author intends to apply: 'and I shall not only refute the things which are objected to us, but I shall also retort them on the objectors'. Tertullian probably did not intend this sentence to reveal the strategy for the whole of his *Apologeticum*. But he certainly employs this strategy in several paragraphs treating specific themes, for example in *Apol.* 7–9 where he first rejects the accusation that the Christians eat small children and commit incest (7–8) and then accuses the Romans of doing exactly these things themselves (9).

A more implicit strategy used by Tertullian is rhetorical irony. An example of this can be found in *Apol.* 10–16 where he criticizes the Roman and Greek gods. He ironically describes how the pagan images of the gods were made by artisans using all kinds of tools. But even though the gods were hurt very badly by these tools, the gods did not complain. How is this possible? Naturally, because the artisans actually worked on a piece of dead wood or stone. Had the images been living gods, they would not have put up with such treatment.

Another typical strategy of the Greek Apologists was to try to make alliances with whom they considered the best representatives of the Greek tradition, i.e. the philosophers. In chapters 18–30 of his *Legatio*, where Athenagoras discusses the use of images and statues in Greek cults, he points out several times that the Greek philosophers also – like Athenagoras himself and other Christians – reject the concept that God has a physical shape (e.g. *Leg.* 20.2). In addition, Athenagoras cleverly turns the

arguments of the philosophers against the Greek poets whom he considers the originators of the idea that the gods have a physical shape (20.1).

The Apologists could use alliances with the philosophers to show their readers that parts of the Greek traditions agreed with Christianity in certain respects. Those who would be convinced by such an argument were obviously the Greeks with whom the Christians agreed. This would mean that the Apologists strategically aimed at convincing the philosophically educated Greeks. In contrast (with a few exceptions), Latin Apologists usually did not enter into alliances with philosophy – in fact, Tertullian was directly hostile towards philosophy. In chapters 46–50 of *Apologeticum*, he emphasizes the difference between Greco-Roman philosophy and Christianity. The Christians are the 'good guys' who know the truth and live morally while the philosophers have gone astray:

> So, then, where is there any likeness between the Christian and the philosopher? Between the disciple of Greece and of heaven? Between the man whose object is fame and whose object is life? Between the talker and the doer? Between the man who builds up and the man who pulls down? Between the friend and the foe of error? Between one who corrupts the truth, and one who restores and teaches it? Between its chief and its custodian?
>
> (Apol. *46)*

In other apologies, we learn that the Apologists themselves had converted from Greco-Roman traditions to Christianity. Such stories can also be counted among the Apologists' strategies. These statements can be very short, as is the case in Tertullian's *Apologeticum*, or be the overall theme of the treatise, as is the case with Minucius Felix' *Octavius*. In a passage where Tertullian, among other things, expounds on Christian eschatology, he says, 'Once these things were with us, too, the theme of ridicule. We are of your stock and nature: men are made, not born, Christians' (*Apol.* 18). In Tatian's *Oratio ad Graecos*, we find a more detailed but still brief account of his conversion. This account reveals how he happened to find the Christian scriptures after he had searched for the truth in many different cults and rites without finding it:

> While I was engaged in serious thought, I happened to read some barbarian writings, older by comparison with the doctrines of the Greeks, more divine by comparison with their errors. The outcome was that I was persuaded by these because of the lack of arrogance in the wording, the artlessness of the speakers, the easily intelligible account of the creation of the world, the foreknowledge of the future, the remarkable quality of the precepts and the doctrine of a single ruler of the universe.
>
> (Or. *24)*

It is obvious that Tatian used his own conversion as a strategy to convince others that they should also convert to Christianity. Among the things he accentuates are the straightforward arguments in the Christian writings, which in the context of Tatian must be understood as a critique of Greek philosophy. This suggests that Tatian addressed his treatise to people who were critical of the complexity and the sophisticated arguments of the Greek philosophers.

Minucius Felix' *Octavius* is one of the latest of the early Christian apologies from around 200 CE and is particularly interesting for the discussion of apologetic strategies. It is organized as one long account of the conversion of a pagan to Christianity; as such, a mere (though not insignificant) tendency in earlier Christian apologetic writings has been made the determining principle of the content and structure of the entire text. *Octavius* is organized as a dialogue between two friends – the pagan Caecilius and the Christian Octavius. Caecilius is the first speaker, offering a positive account of the Roman religion and cult and criticizing Christianity (5–15). After Caecilius has spoken, Octavius responds by giving a positive account of Christianity and criticizing the Roman cult and religion (16–38). In the end, Caecilius is convinced of the superiority and truth of Christianity and converts to Christianity.

In my opinion, Minucius Felix' *Octavius* should be regarded as a conclusion to the second-century Christian apologetics. If this is correct, the inclusion of conversion stories stands out as the main strategy in early Christian apologetics. Therefore, we must also pay attention to the fact that in *Octavius*, the conversing parties – a Christian and a non-Christian – were friends. This is significant because it demonstrates that an important aim of early Christian Apologists was to teach other Christians how to enter into dialogues with their non-Christian friends in order to convert them to Christianity. Simultaneously, however, such conversion stories could also serve as ideal conversion paradigms for other Christians who recently converted.

Main content of the apologetic writings

The Apologists treat many different topics in their treatises as a result of the accusations raised against Christians. Now I will mention the most important general themes and describe how the Apologists reacted to and argued against these accusations.

Atheism, superstition and other politically loaded charges

Because most Christians did not recognize the Greco-Roman gods as gods and therefore did not participate in the local and imperial cults, the Christians were accused of atheism.[25] In the second and third centuries, the state deities and the divinity of the emperor were an integral part of the foundation and the legitimacy of the Roman empire. Consequently, anyone who did not acknowledge the existence of deities – atheists – was considered to deliberately place themselves outside of society and to endanger it because they challenged the *Pax Deorum*, which guaranteed the welfare of the society. To be accused of atheism was, therefore, a very serious charge.

The fact that Christians were accused of atheism is not only apparent from the apologetic texts but is also confirmed by texts written by early critics of Christianity. Hence, two accusations figure prominently both in the writings of the early critics and in those of the Apologists: (1) The Christians did not take part in the local Greco-Roman cults; (2) The Christians did not honour the emperor as a god.

Both charges were formulated in the correspondence between Pliny and Trajan (112 CE).[26] Pliny's letter to Trajan is the first outsider account to refer to Christianity, but although it reveals that the mere accusation of being Christian was punishable by death, it does not use the word atheism. However, according to Pliny, part of the legal proceedings against the Christians involved instructing them to pray and sacrifice to the Roman gods and to the image of the emperor; further, they were instructed to curse Christ.[27] A little later in his letter to Trajan (*Letters* 10.96.9–10), Pliny writes that attempts to diminish and stop the growth of Christianity had led to the re-establishment and flourishing of the traditional Greco-Roman cults. This signals that the conflict between Christians and the non-Christian authorities and populations was about religious and cultic ideas and practices, among other things, and this very circumstance endangered the empire.

In Pliny's letter, however, these charges are not summed up as a charge of atheism. Accordingly, J. J. Walsh claims in his article 'On Christian Atheism' that Pliny and other early critics of Christianity, in fact, did not accuse the Christians of being atheists.[28] In Walsh's opinion, this charge did not emerge before the time of Marcus Aurelius.[29] His observation is probably correct insofar as we think of explicit charges of atheism. However, in my opinion, it is obvious that, to Pliny, one of the fundamental problems with Christians was that they would not participate in the Greco-Roman cults because they did not accept the Greco-Roman gods as gods,[30] and this is a fundamental aspect of atheism.

From the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161–180 CE) and onwards, the charge of atheism was explicit and outspoken.[31] Thus, in his *Church History* (4.13) Eusebius quotes a letter from Marcus Aurelius to the provincial Council of Asia in which the emperor explains why the council should be cautious about bringing forward accusations against the Christians:

> The Emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus Armenicus Pontifex Maximus, holding Tribunician Power the fifteenth time, Consul the third, to the Council of Asia, greeting. I know that the gods also take care that such persons should not go undetected: they are far more likely to punish those who will not worship them than you are. You get them into serious trouble by your accusations of atheism and thereby strengthen their existing determination: and if accused they would choose apparent death rather than life, for the sake of their own god. And so they are the real winners when they part with their lives rather than agree to carry out our commands.

It is clear from the passage quoted, especially the last lines, that Marcus Aurelius did not propose this strategy out of any kind of sympathy towards the Christians. The most important message for us is that Christians explicitly are accused of atheism and that atheism was a serious charge.

Common to such charges is the underlying assumption that Christians destabilized both local societies and the empire as a whole. The Christians' negligence in not fulfilling their religious and social obligations could bring about the wrath and punishment of the gods.[32] Faced with these charges, the second-century Apologists defended Christianity in different ways. In his *First Apology* (3–5), Justin argues that Christians should not be condemned just because of the 'name', i.e. just because they are called or call themselves Christians. Instead, the authorities ought to investigate the manners of the Christians in order to be able to decide whether these were good or bad. When doing so, the authorities would find that Christians acted properly and to the benefit of society, according to Justin. Moreover, he states in 1 *Apol.* 6 that Christians are called atheists because they reject the evil demons responsible for men's bad lives and acts. In fact, there is a clear link between the Christian's rejection of the demons as gods and the charge of atheism as well as a clear link from this charge to the actual convictions of Christians without any preceding investigations (see 1 *Apol.* 13; 46). But this is erroneous, according to Justin – Christians are not atheists, because they respect the most true God.

The refutation of atheism plays a prominent part in the *Legatio* of Athenagoras in which the Apologist argues against this charge in different ways.[33] First, he states that the reason for the refusal of the Christians to take part in the local and imperial cults is not that they are atheists, but that they are monotheists (2–12). This is a significant difference in that it clearly demonstrates that Christians do indeed acknowledge a transcendent and sustaining power. Accordingly, the difference between Christians and non-Christians is not that the Christians reject a transcendent and sustaining power while non-Christians acknowledge it. The difference lies in defining this power. According to the Greeks and Romans, there are many gods; according to the Christians, there is only one true God. Thus, the Christian theology comes into play as one of Athenagoras' arguments.

In the first part of his treatise, where he argues that Christians are monotheists, Athenagoras uses positive as well as negative arguments. Of course, he rejects the accusations that the Christians are atheists (*Leg.* 4.1–2), but he devotes more space and energy to his positive account of the Christian understanding of God as one (7–12). He even goes into details with the question of how this one God can have a son who is also God (10.2–5). In this passage, we find some of the very first considerations about a trinitarian understanding of God. Why did Athenagoras explain Christian theology in such detail? According to Athenagoras himself, his intention is to prevent his addressees – the emperors – from being led astray by false opinions about Christian beliefs. He further claims that in this way he is able to prove that Christians are not atheists. This straightforward explanation – that Athenagoras wants to teach the emperors about Christianity, and then they will stop persecuting the Christians – is probably part of the answer, but not the whole answer. Thus, it is easily imaginable that Athenagoras uses these positive arguments about the Christian theology to convince non-Christian (and perhaps Christian) readers in general about the truth and the positive intentions of Christianity in relation to the stability and welfare of the society.

Tertullian confirms that the charge of atheism was the most important charge against the Christians (*Apol.* 10.1), and he rejects the accusations in *Apologeticum* 10–27. He gives a very short answer to the

question of why the Christians do not worship the gods: it is because the gods of the Greeks and the Romans are not gods at all. The arguments for this claim are unfolded in *Apol.* 10–16. One is that humans invented the Greco-Roman gods, for example, as a result of dead people being deified (11). Tertullian further claims that the images of the gods are mere handicrafts made of wood or other materials. Thus, at a certain time, a material substance could be formed into an image of a god or goddess, but later, it would be redesigned as a spoon or a pot used for cooking (12). As a third example, Tertullian criticizes the Roman and Greek gods because they are associated with many kinds of violence, like the violence going on in arenas (15).

Like Athenagoras before him, Tertullian does not stop at this negative critique of the pagan gods but continues with positive descriptions of some of the main points of Christianity. In *Apologeticum* 21, he focuses on the divinity of Christ. In this description, it is clearly important for Tertullian both to underline how the Christian belief in Christ as God is related to the Jewish belief in the Messiah and how the Christ can be said to be the son of God without being a product of God's sexual escapades – as was the case with the endless number of children of the Greek and Roman gods. Even if Tertullian is not as explicit as Athenagoras in his positive descriptions of Christianity, it is obvious that he also feels compelled to say something positive about the Christian beliefs.

A special aspect of the general charge of atheism directed against the Christians is that they did not bring sacrifices to the image of the emperor. It is not quite clear from the apologetic texts what this cult of the emperor was, but generally it is clear that one part of it was that some emperors were deified after their death. To these emperors, one could bring sacrifices as to other gods. Another aspect was the cult of the living emperor. The living emperor could be worshipped as a god or a demigod, and the citizens could bring sacrifices to the other deities for the sake of the welfare of the emperor.[34] In Tertullian's *Apologeticum* 28–35, it seems as if the charge against the Christians belong to the latter category (cf. 28.2). Confronted with the charge that Christians do not sacrifice to the gods on behalf of the emperor's welfare, Tertullian first asks whether the emperor depends on the gods or vice versa. And he already knows the answer: the emperor maintains the cults – accordingly, the gods depend on the emperor. For this reason, Christians cannot and should not be forced to take part in this empty cult of the emperor. On the other hand, he positively describes how the Christians do indeed pray to the true God for the emperor (31–32). The Bible thus orders the Christians to pray for the authorities because the authorities were inaugurated by God himself. Furthermore, the Roman empire was God's way of postponing the destruction of the world. According to Tertullian, the Christians consequently have no interest in undermining the emperor because he has been chosen by God. Therefore, the Christians honour the emperor and pray for him (33).

Further, and related to the charge of atheism, the Apologists criticized the Roman authorities for treating Christians in an illegitimate way when they were accused and convicted only because they confessed to being Christians. That this was indeed the case has been demonstrated by J. Engberg in an analysis of Pliny's correspondence with Trajan: Pliny tested the Christian's confession, and if the accused stuck to it, he was executed – merely because of the name 'Christian'. In fact, Pliny was not entirely convinced that this was the correct way to proceed: 'Should the name itself be punished (even if crimes are absent), or the crimes that go with the name?', as he writes in *Letters* 10.96. But this was nevertheless the road he took. What is not so clear from the texts of Pliny and Trajan, is *why* the Romans felt it necessary to execute Christians who stuck to their confession. There are, however, some hints in the texts. As part of the trial, Pliny (knowing very well that the Christians worshipped Christ as their god) asks the accused to pray to the gods and to bring sacrifices to the images of Trajan and the gods. This reveals that the Christians were convicted not only because they were atheists but also because the Roman authorities suspected them to be representatives of a despicable *superstitio* that – just as atheism – led to disloyalty towards the emperor and the gods. At that time, superstition was considered as dangerous as (sometimes even worse than) atheism. According to the second-century biographer Plutarch, 'the atheist, apparently, is unmoved regarding the Divinity, whereas the superstitious man is moved as he ought not to be, and his mind is

thus perverted' (*On Superstition* 2). Thus, the Christian Apologists are telling the truth when they complain that Christians were convicted and executed only 'because of the name' – that is, only because they confessed to being Christians, because this name alone, to the Romans, was proof of superstition and all the negative aspects that came with this stamp.

In the texts of the Apologists, there is evidence that the Christians were also met with other, related, political accusations. In *Apologeticum* 38–41, Tertullian discusses the charge that Christians were forming secret associations. The Roman political administration and rulers were always on guard against groups that – in the eyes of the Roman authorities – conspired against those in power. It was, therefore, illegal to form associations without obtaining permission from the authorities. The Christian communities had no such permission and were thus considered illegal associations.

Tertullian defends the Christians against this charge by arguing that they are criminalized only because they do not want to take part in the society's customary social and religious life – the Christian communities are not and should not be considered a threat to Roman society and social order. In order to prevent any speculations about what went on in the Christian communities, Tertullian describes these communities and their activities: the Christians meet to pray to the one true God; they discuss the Christian scriptures, they sing, and they admonish each other to live their lives as Christians. Further, the Christians share everything, except their wives; they give money and food to the poor, and they dine together. It follows that, according to Tertullian, the Christian communities were in no way a menace or threat to society or to its rulers. What happened in the Christian communities was not more 'dangerous' to society than when carpenters, cooks or others met in one of the numerous *koina*, or associations – quite the contrary. Thus, the meetings of the Christians involved ethical and moral training, which is why, according to Tertullian, the Christian associations are actually best compared with those philosophical schools that were well respected and legally recognized by the authorities.

Tertullian further stresses that the Christians pray for the emperor and the Roman empire (*Apologeticum* 28.2). And Justin (1 *Apol.* 11) argues against the suspicion that the Christians tried to establish a new earthly kingdom by stressing that the kingdom, which the Christians await, is the kingdom of God not belonging to this world. He also emphasizes that Christians follow the example of their master and therefore pay the taxes that were demanded from them (1 *Apol.* 17).

Most of the second-century Apologists emphasized their loyalty towards society and the authorities in order to avoid suspicions of disloyalty or of being a direct threat to the society and the authorities in power. By the third century, things seem to have changed. Christianity was better established, and at least some Christians seem to have been more self-confident. This can be deduced from the question about forming associations. According to Origen (*Contra Celsum* 1.1), the first main point in Celsus' attacks on Christianity was that Christians formed secret associations contrary to the laws. To judge from the prominent position Celsus gave to this charge, it must have been very serious. In his answer, Origen does not deny that the Christians form associations, neither does he deny that these are illegal and could be a threat to the Roman society. Instead, Origen responds that Christians live in a society where the laws themselves are contrary to the divine law. Therefore, they are doing the right thing when they abandon the false laws in order to live according to the divine law. Hence, Origen clearly did not consider it important to try to calm down those who were suspicious against the Christian communities. Later on (1.7), he also underlines that the associations of the Christians are not secret – Christianity had now become known to almost everyone in the Roman empire. This development and Origen's frankness is most likely the result of the growing power of Christianity around 250 CE – a power which Christianity did not have in the second century when most of the early Christian Apologists were writing and when Celsus raised his criticism of Christianity.

From these observations, we can conclude that, from the beginning of the second century, Christians were accused of being a liability to the stability of the Roman empire and, consequently, a political threat. This charge appeared in different forms. They were accused of being atheists, first indirectly, then explicitly. On the one hand, the Apologists confirmed that Christians did not

worship the Greek and Roman gods or the emperor. But this was because these were not real gods. Therefore, the Apologists denied that Christians were atheists, because they believed in, and served, the one true God. The 'political' aim of the Apologists was thus to defend the Christians, describing them as loyal citizens of the empire; their 'theological' aim was to defend the Christians by describing their theism. As theists – and not atheists – Christians agreed with their pagan neighbours that God is a transcendent and sustaining power who takes care of men and society – if worshipped correctly. A similar political accusation lies behind the decision of the Roman authorities to execute Christians merely on account of their name, because this revealed that they did not properly worship and honour the Roman gods. So whether atheists or adherents of a despicable superstition or members of dangerous secret societies, the Christians – in the eyes of the Romans – endangered the welfare and stability of the Roman empire by refusing to sacrifice to the emperor and the Roman state deities. Theology and politics were thus intimately interconnected.

Ethical charges

Another kind of typical charge against the Christians concerned ethical issues. It is evident that Christians in the second century were confronted with different charges concerning their moral habits, their way of life and their cultic arrangements. The Apologists responded to these charges by denying them, by showing that immorality was widespread in the Greco-Roman tradition and by claiming that in fact, the moral standards among the Christians exceeded those of any other inhabitants of the empire.

In his letter to Trajan from the early second century, Pliny says that some of the accused whom he had questioned had told him that on a certain day in the week (Sunday), the Christians used to meet and eat together – but only ordinary and innocent food (*Letters* 10.96.7). From the way he expresses himself, it seems that Pliny knew Christians were accused of cannibalism, but he did not find any reason to believe this accusation. Another typical accusation in the second century was that the Christians practised incest and other kinds of sexual amoralities, as can be seen, e.g. in Minucius Felix' *Octavius*, where he quotes a passage from Fronto's speech against the Christians, delivered some time before his death in the 160s.[35]

Tertullian deals with all these charges in *Apologeticum*, chapters 7–9. He describes the charges of cannibalism and incest in a way that reveals they were quite widespread, and he uses several different arguments in his defence against the charges. First, he challenges the judges to investigate the charges and prove that they are true – which they, naturally, would not be able to do. Second, Tertullian uses irony to refute the charges by saying:

> If you want to know what is going on in the cult of the Christians, you can go and ask the leader of the cult what is required for the ceremony of initiation into the cult. If the charges are true, he will answer the following: 'You must have a child still of tender age, that knows not what it is to die, and can smile under thy knife; bread, too, to collect the gushing blood; in addition to these, candlesticks, and lamps, and dogs – with tidbits to draw them on to the extinguishing of the lights: Above all things, you will require to bring your mother and your sister with you'.
>
> *(Tertullian,* Apologeticum *8.7)*

This ironic response is clearly intended to – and does – demonstrate how foolish it would be to think that cannibalism and incest could take place in the Christian groups. Finally, Tertullian also uses the well-known apologetic argument that the Romans themselves and their beloved gods do the very things they accuse the Christians of (9).[36] To underline his point, he lists numerous stories from the Greek and Roman mythological traditions. In this case, Tertullian uses no positive arguments, but, as we shall see below, Athenagoras does.

In chapters 31–36 of the *Legatio*, Athenagoras discusses the same charges of cannibalism and incest and uses various arguments to refute these charges: the first argument rests on the Christian teaching about eternal life or eternal punishment. The Christians know, Athenagoras says (*Leg*. 31.3–4; 36), that they will be punished or rewarded in the life to come according to their works in this life. As a result, they will not commit such crimes. Next (32–35), he uses the well-known apologetic strategy of turning the charges against the accusers themselves. The Greeks should not criticize the Christians for sexual misbehaviour because the Greek gods themselves excel in immoral behaviour. Thus, they were notorious for committing incest – not least Zeus, who was married to his own sister and had children with his mother as well as with his daughter. Finally, the Greeks, in general, were known for a promiscuous sexuality, and some of them earned money from female as well as male prostitution.

According to Athenagoras, the moral behaviour of the Christians is exactly the opposite of this. The Christians have laws that forbid them to look at women with lustful desire (cf. Matt. 5:28). The Christians consider each other brothers and sisters, parents and children. They protect their 'families' so that their bodies will not be harmed (*Leg*. 32.4–5). The Christians only have sexual intercourse with their spouses – and only in order to continue the bloodline.[37] There are even Christians who totally abstain from marriage and sexual intercourse in order to come closer to God. Divorce is not allowed for Christians, and widows are not allowed to re-marry.

It is obvious that many of these ethical and moral charges against the Christians were connected with the cultic life of the Christians, and that there were many rumours about it. These rumours probably stemmed from the non-Christians' unfamiliarity with the Christian cult, resulting, at least partly, from the fact that the Christian cult was accessible only to the baptized. Thus, the non-Christians only heard about the sharing of blood and flesh, the love between sisters and brothers and so on, a situation almost bound to be misunderstood by some of the enemies of Christianity.

Christianity: a new religion without tradition

A final – less typical, yet recurring – criticism of Christianity to be mentioned here is the claim that Christianity was a new religion that threatened the Roman *mos maiorum* (ancestral custom). In a society that – unlike our modern society – honoured tradition and antiquity, this was a charge not to be taken lightly. Among many others, Pliny's contemporary Suetonius contends that, 'innovations in the customs and principles of our forefathers do not please us, nor seem proper',[38] and he mentions that emperor Nero severely punished the Christians, 'a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition' (*Nero* 16.2). Celsus also raised the charge of – unacceptable – newness against Christianity, which, he claims, had broken off from the Jewish traditions. Origen responds, in *Contra Celsum* 2.1, that Celsus was mistaken in this claim. Quite the contrary, they still follow these traditions. Christianity is the true continuation of Judaism, and since the Jewish scriptures prophesy the coming of the Christ, they, therefore, belong to the Christians. Moreover, Origen tries to demonstrate that the Christian traditions about the creation of the world are older than the traditions of the Greeks. The Christian traditions go back to the Old Testament prophets (Moses), while the Greek traditions only go back to Plato's *Timaeus*, Origen claimed.

A more or less similar argument can be found in Tertullian's *Apologeticum* 21 when he claims that although everyone knows that Christianity dates to the time of Tiberius, it is, in fact, much older – because Christianity is the true heir of the Old Testament prophecies about the Christ. The Jews failed to recognize Jesus as the Christ, and, therefore, the Christians have taken their place.

Conclusion

Above, I have presented a group of second- and early third-century Christian Apologists and their texts. This group definitely included more members (as we know more names from, e.g. Eusebius), but unfortunately, little other than their names is known about these. The Apologists used different

styles, arguments and methods, and their treatises had different addressees and could be focused on different themes. But they also shared many common traits, and they were all focused on defending Christianity against formal and informal, direct and indirect attacks from non-Christians, whether these came from authorities or individual persons. The most common accusations were that Christianity was a new religion and that the Christians were unethical and immoral, superstitious, atheists and/or members of secret communities. The charges of atheism and superstition had indirect political implications, because proper worship of the deities was a precondition for maintaining the stability and welfare of the empire. But the Apologists also defended Christianity against direct political accusations, such as being members of secret communities, which were always a thorn in the side of the Roman elite. The Apologists used their treatises to reject these charges – and thus to defend Christianity – but at the same time, their treatises served an important function for Christian identity formation, which is a feature that has rightly been increasingly stressed in the most recent scholarship.

Notes

1 This overview chapter draws on material from two of my previous articles on apologetics (Jacobsen 2009a, 2009b).
2 See Jacobsen (2009b: 21).
3 Most of them are mentioned by Eusebius in his *Church History*, see 3.33.3; 4.3.3; 4.8.3; 4.16.7–8; 4.24; 6; 17.1. Eusebius mentions more apologists and more titles of apologetic writings (e.g. 4.26.1; 4.27), but these texts are unfortunately lost.
4 His text was not available for us until a tenth-century manuscript was discovered in 1878 by Armenian monks in Venice. Concerning Aristides, see further Pedersen (2014).
5 Cf. also Ulrich (2014) for Justin Martyr.
6 See Georges (2015) for this relationship.
7 Concerning Tatian, see Falkenberg (2014).
8 See Jacobsen (2014) and my article in Brill (forthcoming) for Athenagoras.
9 Cf. Engberg (2014) for Theophilus.
10 Coxe (1989 (reprint): 159).
11 Altaner (1955: 87).
12 Bardenhewer (1913: 175).
13 Quasten (1962: 186).
14 Fiedrowicz (2000: 15, 17).
15 Edwards *et al.* (1999: 8–9).
16 P. Keresztes analyses, Justin's *First Apology* in accordance with classical rhetorical categories. He argues that Justin's text is an apologetic work with a defensive character (1965: 100), thus agreeing that apologetic texts must include defensive elements. From there, he goes on to show that the type of defence found in Justin's 1 *Apol.* is not forensic (100) but deliberative (106 and 108) and persuasive (105f.). According to Keresztes, the situation in which the Christians found themselves in the second century would not allow them to make a forensic defence, but they could – as Justin did – try to persuade and advise (110) the emperor to deal with the Christians in a more proper way.
17 Von Harnack (1909: 496–497).
18 Von Harnack (1909: 522–523).
19 Von Harnack (1909: 523).
20 Edwards *et al.* (eds) (1999: 1).
21 Fiedrowicz (2000: 14).
22 What is new here is not that the writings of the apologists dealt with identity formation. Already A. Von Harnack was aware of that, although he did not dwell on the point. But the significance of this element has been increasingly stressed – with different nuances – and it should not be overlooked.
23 Engberg (2009).
24 Jacobsen (2012).
25 Wlosok (1974: 149) describes the charges against the Christians of atheism as one of the most widespread and serious charges against which the apologists had to argue. Wlosok underlines the important connection between the Christians' monotheism, their critique of the pagan polytheism and the charges of being atheists. As we shall see later, the apologists rejected this connection claiming that monotheism in no way leads to atheism. See further these classical contributions to the theme: Von Harnack (1905) and Nestle (1950).

26 Cf. Engberg (2007: 173–206) who evaluates the scholarly discussions of what can be learned about the relations between the Roman authorities and the Christians from the letters of Pliny and Trajan. See further Sherwin-White (1966) – the standard commentary to the letters of Pliny.
27 Pliny, *Letters* 10.96.5.
28 Walsh (1991: 258–259).
29 'In our pagan sources it is not until the late 170s (Celsus, Lyon, etc.) that atheism is clearly discernible as the chief concern of pagans' (Walsh 1991: 262).
30 See Engberg (2007: 193–198), who reaches the same conclusions.
31 Wlosok (1974: 152–154) rightly says that the increased critique of the Christians under Marcus Aurelius was a consequence of the grave difficulties (wars, natural disasters, famine, etc.) facing the empire during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. This situation led to criticism and persecution of Christians because Marcus Aurelius and numerous others in the empire reasoned that the problems were the result of the wrath of the gods. The cult had not been properly conducted and thus the gods were angry (cf. the *Pax Deorum*). According to Wlosok, it was easy and obvious to blame the increasing number of Christians for this infringement of the *Pax Deorum*.
32 Cf. Benko (1980).
33 The discussion of this accusation is the theme of chapters 2–30.
34 See Gradel (2002).
35 See Engberg (2006: 315–319).
36 Justin uses the same argument against charges of cannibalism and sexual excesses; cf. 2 *Apol*. 12.
37 Cf. also Justin 1 *Apol*. 29.1.
38 Suetonius *De Clar. Rhet*. 1.

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29
EARLY THEOLOGIANS

Gerald Bray

About the year 180 there was a noticeable change in the level and content of Christian writing. What had been largely occasional and apologetic in nature now became much more systematic and ambitious, reflecting the enormous strides which the Christian church had made and the growing need for its leaders to present a reasoned account of their faith which could stand alongside the great works of pagan antiquity. During the course of the third century, Christian writers outstripped their pagan counterparts to become the most profound and prolific force in both the Greek and the Latin literary worlds. This happened, it should be noted, before Christianity became a legal religion (with the Edict of Milan in AD 313), by which time its intellectual underpinnings were as solid as those of any of its rivals.

The achievement of these years belongs to a group of theologians who mostly worked independently of one another, but who together created a corpus of writings which have been regarded ever since as classics (Osborn 1993). During this period, moreover, there was a clear and conscious divide between 'orthodox' writings, on the one hand, and heretical ones on the other. There is considerable debate (Turner 1954; Bauer 1964; Osborn 1993) about the appropriateness of using this terminology to describe writings before *c.* 180, but after that time there can be no doubt. However poorly it may have been defined, there was an orthodox consciousness in the church which united its principal apologists and set them apart from others who were being clearly branded as dissidents. This consciousness survived any number of schisms, and even the posthumous condemnations which affected some of the leading theologians of this period.

Another important factor which must be taken into account is the rise of a Latin-speaking Christianity which was increasingly independent of its Greek predecessor. Broadly speaking, the two language areas developed distinctive traditions with very little interaction between them during this period. This would have important consequences at a later date, when it became necessary to resolve doctrinal controversies at the ecumenical level. However, at the time they were writing, all the theologians discussed here believed that they were expressing the mind of the universal church and were unaware of any major differences between them.

For the sake of clarity, this chapter is subdivided into Greek and Latin sections, and each major theologian is treated separately within the appropriate section.

Greek writers

Irenaeus

His life

Irenaeus was born in Smyrna, one of the seven churches of Asia mentioned in the book of Revelation sometime about 140. As a young man he heard the aged Bishop Polycarp preach, and through him had direct contact with the apostolic age. At some point, Irenaeus left Asia Minor for Gaul, where he settled in the city of Lugdunum (Lyon). In 177 he went on a mission to Rome to deal with some questions raised by the Montanist heresy, but when he returned to Lyon he found a church decimated by persecution. He was immediately elected its bishop and remained there for the rest of his life. It is not known how or when he died, though a late tradition claims that he was martyred. Irenaeus wrote in Greek, which was his native tongue, even though he ministered in a Latin-speaking province of the Roman empire.

His works and theology

Of his many writings, most survive only in fragments. Only two of his treatises have been preserved intact, one in a Latin translation and the other in Armenian. The first of these is the *Detection and Overthrow of the So-called Gnosis*, more usually known as *Against all Heresies*, and it is on this work that Irenaeus' reputation as a theologian rests. There are several editions available (Massuet 1710; Harvey 1857; Dods 1885; Roberts and Rambaut 1868–9). As the original title indicates, it is divided into two parts. The first consists of a single book, which gives a history of Gnosticism and details the beliefs of particular Gnostic thinkers. It is an invaluable source for our knowledge of Gnosticism, though it must now be supplemented and corrected by the Gnostic texts discovered at Nag Hammadi (Egypt) in 1946 (see Olson 1992). The second part is divided into four books, each of which is a refutation of Gnosticism. The first of these books combats Gnostic ideas from the standpoint of reason, the second from the standpoint of the church's doctrine, and the third from the sayings of Jesus. The last book is a treatise on the resurrection of the flesh, which all the Gnostics denied.

The work is not well structured, and this has led to a number of theories about its composition (see Benoit 1960; Bacq 1978). Some scholars (see Minns 2010) have maintained that Irenaeus threw it together haphazardly over many years, but it seems more likely that he had a planned structure from the beginning, which he supplemented at different times. The various incongruities and repetitions can therefore be regarded as later insertions which were never properly edited. Irenaeus is known to have depended on earlier sources, but as these have almost all been lost it is impossible to say to what extent.

His second surviving work is the *Demonstration of Apostolic Teaching* which was unknown until an Armenian version turned up in 1904. English translations are available (Robinson 1920; Smith 1952). It is subdivided into two main parts, the first of which tells the sacred history of mankind from Adam to Christ and the second of which tries to prove the truth of the Christian revelation on the basis of Old Testament prophecies. The first part is prefaced with a short discourse on the Trinity, one of the earliest in Christian literature.

Irenaeus' theology was fully Trinitarian, and he believed that all three divine persons could be found at work in the Old Testament as well as in the New (Osborn 2001). He was particularly concerned to identify the Creator God with the Father of Jesus Christ, in direct refutation of most Gnostic theories. As for the Son, he believed in his eternal generation from the Father, but castigated any attempt to explain this great mystery. He was strongly interested in the incarnation, and the extent to which the Son shared our humanity (Wingren 1959; Lassiat 1974).

Irenaeus believed that God's revelation was fully contained in the New Testament, though he did not use that word to describe the apostolic writings (Lawson 1948). His canon seems to have contained the *Shepherd of Hermas*, but not the Epistle to the Hebrews. According to Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses* 3.3.1), the right interpretation of the Bible had been confided to the churches that had been founded by the apostles, and it was to them that the seeker after truth should turn. This helps to explain his particular reverence for the church of Rome, because it was the final home of both Peter and Paul. Irenaeus believed that the apostles had entrusted what he called 'the canon of truth' to these churches (*Adv. Haer.* 1.3.4). This may have been a kind of credal formula, which is certainly what the expression came to signify at a later date, or it may have been simply the general gist of apostolic teaching, which is preserved for us in the New Testament as a whole.

Irenaeus had a tripartite view of the human being, which was divided into body, soul and spirit. He further believed that the soul was the image of God, which at the fall of Adam had lost its likeness to the divine being. Salvation therefore was the restoration of the lost likeness to the image, which took place by an extensive programme of 'recapitulation' (Fantino 1986; Holsinger-Friesen 2009). According to this idea, Christ was the second Adam, whose main purpose was to recapitulate human history, avoiding the errors of the first Adam and his offspring (see Nielsen 1968). In this scheme of things, Mary the mother of Jesus became the second Eve, an identification which came originally from Justin Martyr, but which Irenaeus incorporated into a complete doctrine of salvation. Irenaeus believed that history was heading towards a final cataclysm, predicted in the book of Revelation. He was what would today be described as a 'millenarian', although his version of this relied more on recapitulation than on any dispensational theories.

In spite of the loss of most of his output and the disorganised nature of what remains, Irenaeus has a claim to be called the first systematic Christian theologian. He had a clear sense of what was wrong with Gnosticism and was able to articulate a coherent picture of the Christian theology that was needed to combat it.

Hippolytus

His life

Although he was almost certainly of eastern, and possibly of Alexandrian origin, Hippolytus spent most of his active years at Rome, where he was the last major figure to use Greek as his chief means of expression. He was already prominent in that city in 212, when Origen heard him preach there, and in 217 he set himself up as the head of the Roman church in defiance of Pope Callistus I, whom he regarded as too lenient in his treatment of penitents. The schism continued until 235, when both Hippolytus and Pontian, Callistus' successor but one, were arrested and deported to Sardinia. It is thought that the two men became reconciled at this time, and that both died in captivity shortly afterwards. They were buried together at Rome in 236 or 237, and a statue was erected to Hippolytus about the same time. This statue, or something claimed to be it (see Brent 1995) was recovered in 1551 and installed in the Vatican Library in 1959 (see Figure 29.1). On its base are inscribed all the works claimed to be by Hippolytus, but although this list helped scholars to identify works preserved under other names, and to give us an idea of what we have lost, there is no reason to believe that all (or any) of the works mentioned are by Hippolytus.

His works and theology

Little of Hippolytus' work has been preserved in the original Greek (Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vols 10 and 16), but there are numerous translations into Latin and a number of oriental languages which have survived (Quasten 1950: II, 163–98). English translations are available (MacMahon 1886). Together with the surviving Greek fragments, these give us a fairly complete picture of his

Figure 29.1 The statue of Hippolytus at the foot of the steps leading into the Vatican Library. Photo Philip Esler

works and beliefs. It must be said that the details of his career have been called into question by scholars who doubt the story that he was an anti-pope, but the majority opinion still accepts the broad outline of the traditional account as given earlier.

Hippolytus was a disciple of Irenaeus, and in many ways he represents a middle stage between the bishop of Lyon and Origen. However, it must also be said that he lacks the theological depth of those giants. His most important theological work is the so-called *Refutation of all Heresies* (*Philosophoumena*) of which eight books are preserved. The first has been known since 1701 under the name of Origen, and is a poor summary of the history of Greek philosophy. It was evidently designed as a preliminary to the refutation of the Gnostic heresies derived from it. The next two books are lost, but the following seven were discovered in 1842 and published nine years later. The whole work was identified as belonging to Hippolytus by L. Duncker and F. G. Schneidewin in 1859. Book four is a treatise on astrology and magic, while the tenth book is a summary of Jewish history and true biblical doctrine. The most interesting and important books are 5 to 9 which contain a detailed refutation of 33 different Gnostic sects. These books remain one of the most important sources for our knowledge of Gnosticism, and they show a profundity and originality which are lacking in the other books.

Similar to this was another work, the *Syntagma* (*Against all Heresies*), which is now lost but which can be recovered from fragments as well as from the extensive portions of it which were copied more or less directly into other works, including Tertullian's *On the Prescription of Heretics* and Epiphanius' *Panarion*, or 'remedy' against heresies. It covered 32 different heresies, all of which are

listed at the end of Tertullian's work. Hippolytus believed that heretics were atheists who derived their ideas from Greek philosophy rather than from the scriptures. It was a simplistic view but one which was widely held by contemporaries and which influenced the thinking of more sophisticated theologians like Tertullian.

Hippolytus also wrote a book called *The Antichrist*, in which he endeavoured to prove that Rome was not to be identified with this figure, who was still to come. He made considerable use of the book of Daniel, on which he also wrote a commentary, which is the oldest work of biblical exegesis to survive in its entirety. Hippolytus was also the author of an allegorical commentary on the Song of Songs, which is remarkably similar to that of Origen, though there is no known connection between the two. The ideas contained in it became stock themes of later allegorical commentaries on the book, though it is uncertain whether these were derived from him or from Origen.

Hippolytus also wrote chronological works, of which the most important is his *Chronicle* which he completed shortly before his death. It is a history of the world based mainly on biblical sources, and represents an important attempt to reinterpret human history from a Christian point of view. He also tried to devise a method for calculating the date of Easter, and wrote a treatise on the subject, but it was not successful and had to be abandoned when the calculation failed as early as 237.

Several homilies are known by title, and there are a number of fragments which have been preserved in different places, but there is little more that we can say about them. His major work, from the modern point of view, is the *Apostolic Tradition*, which is a compendium of liturgical practices purporting to be a record of the most traditional rites of the church. It has been known for many centuries, but was not identified as belonging to Hippolytus until 1916 and this identification has been strongly contested in recent years, though it has also been defended (Stewart-Sykes 2001). It survives in a Latin translation, as well as in numerous oriental versions. It appears that the book was quickly forgotten at Rome but preserved in the east, where it became the model for liturgical practice. It is divided into three parts, the first of which deals with the ordination of bishops, priests and deacons, as well as a number of minor ministers.

The second part contains rules for the laity, including rites of baptism, confirmation and first communion. The first of these is of special interest because it contains the full text of the old Roman creed and the pattern of question and answers which characterised early baptismal ceremonies. The last part covers the weekly eucharistic service, the rules for morning prayer, the burial service and a form of catechesis. All of these have become well-known to modern churchgoers because they have formed the basis of the liturgical revisions which have swept through the major Christian denominations in the second half of the twentieth century. As a result of this, there is a vast literature on this work (Quasten 1950: II, 181–5), which is now more influential in the life of the church than any other text from antiquity apart from the Bible itself.

There is not much to be said about Hippolytus' theology except that it is closely modelled on that of Irenaeus. In particular, he follows the same recapitulationist scheme. However, he is less successful in his attempts to defend Trinitarianism against the monarchianism of his time, and in reaction to men like Sabellius, he falls into an extreme form of subordinationism, even going to the point of claiming that the Logos emerged from the Father in three separate stages, of which the incarnation of Christ was the final and most complete one. His ecclesiology is hierarchical, again following Irenaeus and anticipating Origen, but he was a perfectionist with no room for 'sinners' in the church. This point of view is clearly unrealistic, but it is characteristic of many of Hippolytus' contemporaries and cannot be regarded as an aberration on his part.

On the whole, it can be said that Hippolytus was a rather simplistic thinker, who was nevertheless able to categorise the thoughts of others and provide a reasonable schematic account of the different heresies which were current in his day. That made him a useful source for subsequent authors to draw on, and much of what they write concerning this early period must be regarded as deriving more or less entirely from Hippolytus' accounts.

Clement of Alexandria

Clement (Titus Flavius Clemens) was probably born in Athens about 150. It is not known when he became a Christian, but at some point he came under the influence of the Sicilian philosopher Pantaenus, who was a Christian and had become a teacher and head of the catechetical school at Alexandria. Pantaenus died shortly before 200 and Clement succeeded to his position as head of the catechetical school, but in 203 he was forced to flee to Cappadocia because of an outbreak of persecution. There he remained until his death in about 214.

Clement's theological reputation rests on his three surviving books (see Osborn 1957, 2005). The texts are set out in Migne (*Patrologia Graeca* vols 8–9) and there are English translations (for example, Coxe *et al.* 1885). The first of these is the *Protrepticus* ('exhortation'), which is an evangelistic tract. Clement was severely critical of paganism, especially its reliance on mythology. He was also strongly opposed to the mystery religions, which he regarded as a nonsensical mish-mash of material and spiritual elements. His second book, the *Paedagogus* ('tutor') is a sequel to the first. In it, he addresses the man who has been delivered from the foolishness of paganism and tries to instruct him in the way of Christ. He does this by calling Christ the true Logos, borrowing a philosophical term and developing it in the light of John's Gospel, which had also used the same theme. In the first part of the *Paedagogus* Clement concentrates on the idea of love, but in the second part he becomes more practical and gives his reader what amounts to ethical guidance for everyday life. This part of the book is particularly interesting for us, because it gives us one of the best pictures we have of daily life in Alexandria during the Roman period.

The third book is called the *Stromata* ('carpets') because it is a collage of disconnected chapters knit together rather like a carpet. This was a standard genre in late antiquity and was frequently employed by writers who wanted to concentrate on special themes without bothering to construct an overarching philosophical framework to hold them all together. In this book Clement defends philosophy as the true Gnosis, and claims that it was given to the Greeks as their version of the Old Testament. However, he also says that knowledge of God can only come by faith, not by reason, and that Plato copied all his best ideas from Moses.

Clement also wrote a kind of commentary on scripture, but it seems that this was more like an explanation of isolated verses than a systematic treatment of the whole. The work is now lost, but we know something about it from the criticisms made of it by Photius (ninth century). According to Photius, it was highly allegorical in tone and contained a number of fanciful interpretations of the Bible, some of which were frankly heretical. It is possible that Clement got some of these ideas from Philo of Alexandria, but this cannot be proved.

Clement's theology was deeply rooted in philosophy, and he was a firm advocate of the basic harmony between faith and science. To his mind, the Logos was the highest principle in the universe, the creator of the world, and the teacher and lawgiver of mankind. The Logos became incarnate in Christ, but in other ways he had already revealed himself both to the Jews and to the Greeks. His philosophical approach gave him a strong predisposition towards affirming the ultimate unity of all things, and this must have contributed to his aversion to any form of heresy or schism in the church.

Clement believed in the fall of Adam, but not in inherited guilt, and his view of this question has been standard in the eastern orthodox churches ever since. He accepted the notion that baptism was a spiritual regeneration of the believer, and rejected any notion of sacrifice in connection with holy communion, which to him was likewise a purely spiritual rite. Somewhat surprisingly, he spoke out in defence of matrimony, and even regarded it as superior to celibacy, a view which was very rare in ancient times.

Clement's works may be summed up by saying that they reveal a deep and mature knowledge of the Bible, as well as a good command of Greek philosophy. He regarded it as his mission to convert pagan intellectuals to Christianity, and he was the first Christian who took the need to reconcile faith

and science seriously. In that respect his writings have a curiously modern relevance, though their Platonic context (Lilla 1971) creates a barrier which somewhat reduces their appeal today, and the fact that he wrote mainly against the Gnostic heresies of his own time makes much of his teaching almost incomprehensible to anyone not familiar with them.

Origen

His life

A reasonable amount of information survives concerning the life of Origen (Crouzel 1989). He is profiled in Chapter 47 of this volume, and fuller details and bibliography are found there. Origen was born into a Christian family at Alexandria about 185, and was given the best education which his father could afford. He became a pupil in the catechetical school at Alexandria, where he succeeded to the headship in 203, when Clement fled to Cappadocia. He was only about 18 years old at the time, but already his great intellectual gifts were being recognised. It seems that it was about this time also that he castrated himself, in the mistaken belief that this had been approved by Jesus, who had spoken of those who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of God.

Origen travelled widely in his early years at the school, going to Rome in 212 and to Palestine in 216. Later he visited Greece as well, probably in order to deal with heretical tendencies in the churches there. Unfortunately, he had fallen out with Bishop Demetrius of Alexandria, who seems to have been jealous of his pupil's growing fame and brilliance. Demetrius complained that Origen, who was still a layman, should not have been permitted to give lectures to bishops, as he had apparently been doing at Caesarea Philippi on his visit in 216. To avoid any repetition of this problem, the bishops of Jerusalem and Caesarea ordained him when he was on his way to Greece (in 228), but then Demetrius objected on the grounds that a man who had castrated himself was unfit for the ministry! On his return to Alexandria from Greece, Origen was tried by the bishop and his synod, and in 231 he was excommunicated. Demetrius died not long afterwards, and Origen might have stayed in Alexandria, but when the excommunication was confirmed by the new bishop, he gave up the struggle and emigrated to Palestine. There he was welcomed and encouraged to open another theological school, where he taught for nearly 20 years. He suffered in the persecution under Decius in 251, and it seems that he died, possibly of wounds suffered at that time, at some point between then and 254.

Origen's writings

Origen is credited with something like 800 works, almost all of which have been lost. Of the remainder, only a minority have been preserved in the original Greek, and most are available only in Latin translations, some of which are known to be fairly free in their renderings (the texts are in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* vols 11–17; see Crombie 1885 for an English translation). To give some idea of the scale of this loss we may take Origen's homilies, of which there were originally 574. Of these, 388 are now totally lost, 166 survive in Latin and only 20 have come down to us in the original Greek. But although so much has been lost and much of what remains has been abridged, paraphrased and translated, the evidence of the originals, when we have them, suggests that our general picture of Origen's beliefs has not been seriously distorted as a result.

Origen wanted to be remembered above all as a biblical scholar, and his great masterpiece was the so-called *Hexapla*, or Old Testament in six parallel columns. The first of these contained the Hebrew text in its original alphabet. The second was the same text turned into Greek letters, because otherwise it would have been impossible for most people to pronounce. The Hebrew vowel points were not added until some centuries later, so this was an important service for those who wished to

learn the language. The last four columns contained four different Greek translations of the original. The first of these was done by Aquila (*c.* AD 130), the second by Symmachus (*c.* AD 180–200), the third was the Septuagint translation (LXX) and the fourth was done by a Jew named Theodotion (*c.* 200–150 BC).

The compilation of this great work fully justifies Origen's claim to be the founder of the textual criticism of the Bible. Not only did he take the trouble to familiarise himself with Hebrew, which was a very rare accomplishment among the early Christians, but he was also prepared to compare different Greek translations of it, when both the synagogue and the church had more or less accepted the LXX as the preferred version. The *Hexapla* was prepared at Caesarea and remained there for several centuries. Jerome was able to consult it, and testified to its great value. It was so vast that nobody seems to have copied it in full, but extracts were made, and some of these have survived in fragments. Their main value today is to show that the other Greek translations are sometimes superior to the LXX in their rendering of the Hebrew.

In addition to his textual criticism, Origen wrote an enormous number of tracts on the Bible, which can be divided into the so-called *scholia*, which are short exegetical notes, the homilies and the commentaries. The first of these survive only in fragments. The homilies are interesting, but they are of value mainly for our understanding of Origen's spiritual outlook, with its profound mystical streak, and tell us little about the text of scripture itself. It is therefore mainly in the commentaries that we encounter Origen as a biblical interpreter. It seems that these originally covered the entire Bible, but only fragments of them remain, apart from the works on Matthew, John, Romans and the Song of Songs. To these may be added the fragments of 1 Corinthians, which are extensive enough to give us some idea of Origen's treatment of the book as a whole.

Of the commentaries, the one on John is the earliest and most extensive, though parts of it have been lost. Origen spends the first book expounding 'In the beginning was the Word' (John 1:1) and in the course of this exposition he manages to deal with most of the themes of the Gospel as a whole. He believed that John was the greatest of the Gospels because of its theological tone, and this is reflected in his exegesis. The commentary on Matthew is only partially preserved, and his remarks on the first 12 chapters are missing. The approach is less thematic than in the commentary on John, but his tendency to allegorise makes up for this to some extent and produces similar results.

More important than either of these are his commentaries on Romans (Scheck 2001–2) and on the Song of Songs. The first survives only in a Latin abridgment composed by Rufinus around the year 400. There were originally 15 books, but Rufinus cut these down to 10 because he felt that the original was unnecessarily prolix. He must have been right, because even after his editorial work, the commentary seems to us to be extraordinarily verbose and diffuse. Much of it is really a kind of biblical encyclopedia, ranging through the Old Testament in an attempt to explain Judaism to contemporary Gentiles. However, the core treatment of Romans is fundamentally sound and is much more literal than one might expect. It is also marked by a deep pastoral sense, which gives us some insight into Origen's greatness as a Christian leader, as well as a scholar.

It is very different with the commentary on the Song of Songs, which is totally allegorical. Origen regarded the bridegroom as Christ, but he was less consistent with the bride, who is sometimes thought of as the church and sometimes as the soul of the individual believer. This commentary can fairly be said to have set the tone for the next 15 centuries and more, and the ambiguity in his treatment of the bride became typical of the allegorical tradition as a whole. The revival of interest in patristic biblical interpretation that has occurred in recent years has brought Origen and his hermeneutic back into focus, and there have been several important studies of it (Hanson 2002; Simonetti 2004; Lauro 2005; Martens 2012). It must however be doubted whether these will lead to a revival of his interpretive method, which remains alien to scientific approaches to the scriptures.

To the modern mind, Origen's most important work is probably his *Against Celsus* (Chadwick 1953), which is a refutation of the pagan philosopher Celsus' work, the *True Logos*, in which he attacked Christianity and tried to shame Christians out of their faith. Celsus was a Platonist who

wrote about 175, and the most remarkable thing about him is that he was so well-informed about Christianity. He knew the scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments well enough to be able to pinpoint apparent discrepancies in them, and he was thoroughly familiar with the differences between the mainline church and the various Gnostic sects. However, it has recently been shown that in attacking Christianity, Celsus was also giving into it. He basically accepted the Christian contention that people need to be saved, and he tried to prove that philosophy could do this as well, if not better than Christianity. In this respect he was the forerunner of Plotinus and the neo-Platonist philosophers of the third century, who would turn Platonism into a mystical belief which was almost a religion.

Celsus was ahead of his time, and for many decades his work was ignored. Pagans were not yet interested in Christianity and Christians moved in different circles. But by about 240 the two worlds were meeting with increasing frequency, and Origen was persuaded to tackle this great adversary of the faith head on. He did so by quoting extensively from Celsus' work (which is how we now know what Celsus actually said), and by refuting him point by point. The result was a Christian philosophical apologetic which was to be the forerunner of all subsequent efforts of that kind. Without accepting Platonism, Origen borrowed the structure of logic on which it was based and used it to argue for the truth of Christianity. He demonstrated that Christians could use philosophical methods in defence of their cause, without coming to conclusions which were incompatible with the teaching of scripture.

Origen's work extends to eight books, all of which survive in the original Greek. He begins by saying that when Jesus was attacked he remained silent, and regrets that he is unable to follow this wise example, because he has been asked specifically to deal with Celsus' misrepresentations. Celsus apparently attacked the church on the grounds that it was a secret society, and Origen has little difficulty refuting that. He also claimed that there was no real difference between Judaism and Christianity, since both were barbarous in origin, and again, Origen has no problem in showing that that was a gross misunderstanding. Celsus then adopted the persona of a Jew, and argued that the Christians had abandoned their ancestral religion. This was a powerful argument in ancient times, but Origen was able to show that the Christian revelation was inherent in Judaism and represents its fulfilment, not its abandonment. Much of the refutation is therefore concerned with the fulfilment of various Old Testament prophecies in Christ, and this is the heart of Origen's argument. The remainder consists of objections raised by Celsus to the possibility of a divine incarnation, about the uncouth style of the New Testament, and so on. Origen has little difficulty answering these points, and his work has remained a classic of apologetical literature ever since.

Closely related to his rebuttal of Celsus is Origen's great dogmatic work, *On First Principles*, which survives in a number of Greek fragments as well as in a free Latin translation (Smith 1992). This book can fairly claim to be the first manual of systematic theology to have been written by a Christian. In four books it covers theology in the strict sense (i.e. the doctrine of God), cosmology, anthropology and teleology. He begins from the principle that it is the task of the theologian to clarify the obscure passages of scripture, and to harmonise them into a consistent whole. Many of his conclusions rely on an allegorical interpretation of the Bible, which most modern readers find unacceptable, but it is still possible to appreciate his intention and his method to some extent.

'Theology' for Origen covered the being and nature of God, and extended to the entire supernatural realm. It is in that book that he discusses the being of angels, and even the nature of the resurrection body and the last judgement. In the second book he talks about the creation of the material world, a controversial subject in his day because of the Platonist belief that matter was evil. In this book he refutes the Gnostic idea that the creator was an inferior god, and not the Father of Jesus Christ, and he gives an extensive explanation of the incarnation, including a discourse on the human soul. He returns to the theme of the Holy Spirit, which he had already discussed in the first book, and gives a more detailed account of the resurrection and last judgement as well. The third book is more like a running commentary on biblical history, followed by discourses on philosophy,

temptation and time. The final book is an extensive treatment of the inspiration of scripture, and also contains Origen's observations on the Trinity. For the last two books, we have Greek fragments that are long enough to be useful supplements to Rufinus' Latin translation.

Of Origen's remaining works, mention should be made of his *Discussion with Heraclides*, which was discovered in Egypt in 1941. In it, Origen interrogates Heraclides on the latter's Trinitarian orthodoxy, and so the book gives us a useful complement to Origen's other works on that particular subject. There is also his very popular work *On Prayer*, which is the first systematic treatment of that subject by a Christian writer. Origen regards prayer as a supernatural gift, in which the Holy Spirit prays for us. It is the preparation of the soul to receive God, and therefore the foundation of the Christian life. Finally, there is his *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, written shortly after the persecution of 235, which was designed to steel believers to meet the challenge of suffering. Origen's own father had been martyred in the persecution of 202, and he himself was to suffer in 251, so the work has a special poignancy, as well as being a first-hand witness to the main challenge which the church of his day had to face.

Origen's theology

Origen has left us a complete theology, which was to be very fruitful in the subsequent development of the Greek tradition. He believed that God is a simple, intellectual nature, unbegotten, and the Absolute Being. He also believed in the eternal generation of the Son, whom he described as *homoousios* ('consubstantial') with the Father, the first person known to have used this word in any context. Nevertheless, the Father remains *autotheos* ('God in himself'), and we are left to conclude that the Son is in some way subordinate to him. This has been a very controversial subject in Origenist studies, and several scholars have denied that Origen was subordinationist in his thinking, but it must be admitted that his language is somewhat unguarded at this point and that it is easy to see how others would have interpreted him in a subordinationist way.

Origen thought of the three 'persons' of the Godhead as *hypostases*, a word which was current in the jargon of ancient philosophy but which is also found in the New Testament (see especially Heb. 1:3). Each hypostasis is fully divine, and it is in and through them that we meet with God. However, there is an order in this, which may be regarded as a kind of hierarchy. The Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our hearts by faith, giving us a knowledge of the divine. It is his task to reveal the Son to us. The Son in turn is the mediator between God and man, the one who gives us access to the Father, who is in some sense the ultimate divine being. This Trinitarian theology is closely linked to the pattern of Christian experience, and it became the model for subsequent treatments of the subject by the mystical writers of the Greek tradition.

Origen described the incarnate Christ as the God-man (*theanthropos*), once more inventing a concept which was to have a long history. It seems that he may also have been the first person to refer to Mary as *theotokos* ('God-bearer'), though this cannot be proved. In his anthropology, Origen was a firm believer in original sin, and therefore in the necessity of infant baptism, but he did not believe in the eternal punishment of the damned. On the contrary, his eschatology was that at the end of time God would refashion the world by a process known as *apokatastasis* ('restoration'), when all existing sin and evil would be destroyed and the whole creation would be reborn. He also believed that the differences of status between people which are evident in this life can be attributed to the sins committed by our souls in a previous existence, and it is this curious form of reincarnation or *metempsychosis* which was to get him into so much trouble after his death.

Origen believed that the Bible had three senses, corresponding to the three parts of the human being – body, soul and spirit. The first sense is the literal one, the second is the moral one and the third is the spiritual one. According to him, every passage of scripture has a spiritual meaning, but not all have a literal or moral one as well. In practical terms, this meant that if the literal or moral sense was offensive, it was necessary to look behind it to the spiritual meaning, which could be

discerned by allegory. The Song of Songs provides the classic example of this, but the principle could be applied much more widely. Origen was the real founder of Christian allegorical interpretation, and his writings were forerunners of the extravagant interpretations of this kind that proliferated during the Middle Ages. He was criticised for this by Jerome, and his approach has been discounted by modern biblical scholars. On the other hand, it remains influential in mystical circles, to which his allegorical interpretation was closely linked.

Origen was a mystic in his spiritual life, and he developed notions of Christian perfection, of self-knowledge, of asceticism, of the mystical ascent to heaven and of the beatific vision of God which have been found in mystical writing ever since.

Origen became the fountainhead of Greek theology, and there is no writer in that tradition who has not been profoundly influenced by him. His own labours as a pioneer inevitably meant that in many areas his conclusions are tentative and even self-contradictory, and this has been reflected in subsequent controversy. Shortly after his death, the word *homoousios* was taken up by the adoptionist Paul of Samosata and used to such effect that when the fathers of the first council of Nicaea (325) wished to use it to describe the relationship of the Son to the Father, they had to defend themselves against the charge of heresy. Arius, the heretic condemned at Nicaea, also attributed his subordinationist doctrine to Origen, with rather more justification than had Paul.

Towards the end of the fourth century, Origen's hermeneutic was taken up by Jerome and Rufinus, who endeavoured to translate his works into Latin. Jerome soon realised that Origen was defective in his theology, and turned against him, but Rufinus did not follow him in this and the two men fell out over it. Jerome then sounded the alarm in the Latin world, and Origen came under suspicion in many quarters. However, it was not until the sixth century, when his theology was revived at Constantinople, that real trouble occurred. Old suspicions of his orthodoxy resurfaced, and his writings were studied with great care and attention. The result was that he was condemned as a heretic at the second council of Constantinople in 553, largely because of his reincarnationist ideas. After that, he fell out of favour and his works were seldom copied. Today his greatness is universally acknowledged, but the ambiguity remains, and in spite of the enormous influence which he has exerted, he has never been fully rehabilitated as a Christian thinker and teacher.

Latin writers

Tertullian

Tertullian was the first Latin Christian writer of any importance, and his works remain one of the great monuments of early Christian thought (Osborn 1997). He is profiled in Chapter 48 of this work, and further details and bibliography are to be found there. In range and volume they surpass anything which has survived from antiquity before the time of Augustine and Jerome. He deals with everything from the most abstruse points of theology and philosophy to the humblest practical details of everyday life, offering us a complete world-view which is worked out in every detail he can think of. His style is pungent and memorable, provoking either admiration or revulsion, but never indifference.

He was born and brought up in Carthage in the second half of the second century (see Barnes 1985). Evidently his family were well-to-do pagans, and he received the best education which was available at that time. In Tertullian's youth, Carthage was the major centre of Latin letters, and the city wore this tradition proudly. Its church was to provide many of the leading theologians and thinkers of the Latin world, and it bowed to no-one, not even to Rome. Tertullian reflects both this culture and this attitude, and it may fairly be said that his works set the tone for a distinct North African Christianity which would survive until the Arab invasion (AD 698).

Almost nothing is known for certain about his life. Jerome provides us with some biographical details, but these must be regarded as unreliable. The traditional picture of him as a lawyer who

became a presbyter in the Carthaginian church may be correct, but it is not supported by the internal evidence of Tertullian's writings. He must have become a Christian well before 196, when he is known to have been writing highly sophisticated theological treatises, but the details are unknown. He was still writing in 212 and is supposed to have lived to a ripe old age, but we know no more than that.

The biggest problem concerning Tertullian's career is that of his relationship with Montanism. It has traditionally been assumed that he was converted to that sect sometime about 205, and it is possible that he later broke away to found his own group of 'Tertullianists'. This reconstruction is based on internal evidence from his writings and on the fact that there was a sect of Tertullianists in Carthage in the late fourth century. There can be no doubt that Tertullian felt a deep affinity for the Montanists, but this appears to be because their ideas coincided to a great extent with his, not because he was 'converted' to their way of thinking (Bray 1979).

It seems that there were a number of Montanist sympathisers in the early third century, and that it was not until their writings were rejected by the Roman church (about 213) that a clear division appeared between them and the mainline church. Tertullian is known to have been personally affronted by the decision to reject the Montanist prophecies, but whether this led him to break with the Carthaginian church in a formal sense is hard to say. We have to remember that his writings were preserved, and not even their Montanist allusions were expurgated, which seems improbable if he were really condemned by the church at that time. It is not until 494 that we hear of an official condemnation of his works (by Pope Gelasius I), and that was much too late to have any serious impact on his reputation or influence.

Tertullian's writings and theology

Tertullian has left us more than 30 treatises, which can be subdivided according to theme. It is also customary to label them 'pre-' or 'post-' Montanist, but this distinction is more important for their chronology than for an analysis of their content. The first and most famous group of his writings may be described as 'apologetic' because they were formally addressed to pagans or Jews in an attempt to win them to Christianity. It is not known how effective they were at this, but they have remained defences of the Christian position and some of them are still read and even quoted today.

The first of these treatises is his *Apology*, which must have been written about 196–7 and is generally regarded as one of his earlier works. In this book he demonstrates the absurdity of pagan mythology and contrasts it with Christian beliefs, which are based on the well-known historical record. Tertullian does not hesitate to claim that the records of Jesus' trial are still available in the archives at Rome, and he appears totally confident that serious investigation of the sources will clear Christians of the charges laid against them by ignorant accusers. In particular, he refutes the claim that they are bad citizens because they do not participate in emperor-worship, and accuses the Roman government of foolishness in its blind mistreatment of what was in fact one of the most loyal and law-abiding elements within it. This is an important witness to Tertullian's understanding of the state and the relations which the church ought to have with it. Far from being revolutionaries determined to overturn the existing order, Christians were in fact conservative supporters of the empire, whose basic ideals (shorn of their pagan religious associations) they were proud to claim as their own.

Closely resembling the *Apology* is the shorter treatise *To the Nations*, which may in fact be no more than a rough draft of the former. The only major difference between them is that the *Apology* is addressed to the rulers and magistrates of the empire, whereas *To the Nations* is directed to the general public. On similar themes, there are treatises on idolatry, on the shows in the theatres, on the crown of victory worn by soldiers, and on persecution, the last of which is addressed to Scapula, who was governor of Roman Africa about 212. The main arguments of all these treatises are the same as those found in the *Apology*. Idolatry is absurd, persecution of Christians is illogical, and Christian integrity demands that believers refuse to participate in social events which reinforce the false religious beliefs

on which the Roman world was constructed. But to accuse Christians of being disloyal on that account was a misunderstanding, because true loyalty is due to God, whom the Romans have failed to honour properly. What is required is the conversion of Rome to the truth, at which point the conflict between Christian and Roman values will disappear and the former will be revealed as the chief supports of the latter.

Perhaps the most interesting of these treatises is the one *On the Soldier's Crown*, which was apparently occasioned by a historical incident in the army. It seems that a soldier was expected to wear the laurel crown of victory following a successful campaign, but refused to do so on the grounds that he was a Christian. He was then court-martialled and executed. Tertullian takes up his cause with great enthusiasm, but runs up against the objection that nowhere does the Bible tell Christians that they should not wear such a crown. Here we see for the first time evidence of Tertullian's 'rigorism', which might also be described as his insistence that basic Christian principles (as he understood them) must be applied to the practical concerns of everyday life. His approach was to argue that the laurel wreath had obvious pagan associations, being particularly associated with the orgiastic cult of the wine-god Bacchus. It was therefore inappropriate for Christians to wear it, even if the circumstances were not particularly compromising in themselves.

Tertullian's contention was that perception is an important part of reality and that Christians must avoid even the appearance of evil, and it is this belief which governs his rigorism. Other Christians were prepared to be more lenient, and these Tertullian would later brand, in Montanist fashion, as 'psychic' (i.e. 'soul-led') as opposed to the 'spiritual' ones, among whom he numbers himself. But although this terminology came with Montanism, the basic beliefs underlying it can be traced right back to the beginning of his career.

Tertullian also wrote a tract against the Jews, which is basically a defence of the Christian interpretation of Old Testament prophecy. In keeping with his literalistic and historic bent, he gives a detailed account of the prophecies in the book of Daniel, comparing the reigns of the various Hellenistic rulers to what the book predicted. In general, however, he follows the arguments of Paul in his epistle to the Romans, particularly in his exposition of the place of the Gentiles in God's plan of salvation.

Of special interest are his short treatise on *The Testimony of the Soul*, and the much longer work *On the Soul*, in which Tertullian expounds his teaching about human nature, drawing on the resources of ancient philosophy as much, if not more than on Holy Scripture. Tertullian is often portrayed as an anti-philosophical writer, but this is a misrepresentation. It is true that he was openly anti-Platonic at a time when Platonism was enjoying a revival of interest and creativity, but his criticisms of philosophy can be paralleled in other writers who made ample use of Platonic ideas. The truth is that he was a Stoic 'materialist', who believed that all reality was essentially material, including the spirits and even God. He has been strongly attacked for this notion, but in his favour it can be said that at least he was able to develop a theory of reality in which the spiritual and the natural worlds interacted without the kind of conflict which was endemic to Platonism. In this way, Tertullian was able to avoid the dualism characteristic of Platonic writers and to remain more faithful to the biblical vision of reality, even if he misunderstood it in other ways.

Like many works of its kind, *On the Soul* contains a number of fascinating digressions into such areas as dreams and ecstatic experiences, which so fascinated the ancients. The work concludes with the assertion that all souls are kept in hell until the resurrection, when their ultimate fate will be decreed, even though it is already known in advance. With his materialistic outlook, Tertullian was naturally a 'traducianist' in his understanding of the soul. That is to say that he believed that the soul of each individual is inherited from his parents, not created independently at the moment of conception. In this respect, his view is closer to modern beliefs about genetic inheritance than is the majority opinion among his contemporaries. It may be added that Tertullian also believed that sin is a stain on the soul, passed on from one generation to the next, so that it is impossible for any human being to be born in a state of innocence.

The next class of Tertullian's works is directed against the heresies of his time. In these treatises he shows himself at his most vicious, not hesitating to impugn the morality of his opponents. He even calls Marcion a 'mouse' because he came from Pontus, which the Greeks believed was the home of mice. (In modern Greek, the word for 'mouse' is *pontiki*.) This characteristic is distasteful to most modern readers, but it was par for the course among ancient rhetoricians, and can be paralleled without difficulty in the writings of the sixteenth-century reformers, so Tertullian should not be blamed too severely for it.

Of the individual books, pride of place belongs to *The Prescription against Heretics*, because it is in this work that Tertullian outlines his basic principles. These are that heresy is a disease which preys on the weakness of the flesh, that it derives from an addiction to pagan philosophy (see above under Hippolytus), and that it can only be combatted by sticking firmly to the 'rule of faith', which is Christian doctrine as revealed in scripture. Heretics cannot read the Bible because they cannot understand it, and when they attempt to use it to justify their arguments they merely show how ignorant and inept they are.

Tertullian also claims that the apostles conveyed the whole of Christian truth to the church, an assertion which goes directly against the Gnostic belief in a 'secret gospel' which was supposedly kept for those who were specially initiated. This belief is of particular importance when it comes to assessing Tertullian's view of the Montanist prophecies. He evidently believed that they were inspired by God, but not that they added anything of substance to the apostolic deposit. Montanism, like Tertullian's own statements, was an intensification of what was already known and believed – an exhortation to live up to the principles revealed to the apostles, rather than a new departure in the spiritual realm.

Tertullian's longest work is his five-volume book *Against Marcion*, which is a major defence of the unity of the two testaments. Marcion rejected the Old Testament on the grounds that its God was a creator deity inferior to the Father of Jesus Christ. Marcion also expurgated large parts of the New Testament, which appeared to him to be infected with Judaism. Tertullian refutes all this in great detail, by demonstrating among other things that even the parts of the New Testament which Marcion retained (Luke's Gospel and the Pauline epistles) are incomprehensible without taking the Jewish background into account. He goes on to describe how Christ is himself the creator, whose incarnation was predicted by the Old Testament prophets, and cleverly bases his argument exclusively on those parts of the New Testament which Marcion was prepared to accept. The result is a commentary on Luke and Paul which upholds the literal and historical interpretation of the Bible.

Tertullian also wrote treatises against the Gnostics Hermogenes and Valentinus, in which he refutes their ideas as absurd and untenable on their own premises, quite apart from the fact that they are incompatible with scripture. Against Hermogenes, he argues that matter cannot be eternal, because if it is there would be two ultimate principles and therefore two gods behind the universe. Furthermore, Hermogenes effectively made matter superior to God, and therefore on his own principles, regarded evil as more important than good, even though he claimed the opposite. In response to this, Tertullian says that only the biblical doctrine of creation out of nothing can account for the co-existence of spirit and matter in a single universe. The Valentinians were relatively easier to refute, because their fantastic theories were so ludicrous, being a mish-mash of mythology and biblical ideas.

Two other treatises, *On the Flesh of Christ* and *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, are also anti-Gnostic in intention, being directed against the views of men like Marcion and Apelles. They are presented in the form of defences of key Christian doctrines, which everyone recognised as fundamental in the struggle against all forms of philosophical rationalism or mysticism. Tertullian argues that Christ really did become a man and live an ordinary human life. His death on the cross was the ultimate proof of his humanity. Furthermore, it was necessary that Christ should have assumed a human nature, complete with a human soul, since his purpose in coming to earth was to save the human race. Without a genuine incarnation there could have been no resurrection, and therefore no salvation either. In the process, Tertullian develops the view that the Son of God is a divine person who takes on a human

nature without giving up his divinity, a doctrine which anticipates the two-natures Christology of the council of Chalcedon (451), which remains the touchstone of Christological orthodoxy in the western church.

The Resurrection of the Flesh continues the argument, concentrating on the goodness of creation, a view which was denied not only by the Gnostics but by the whole Platonic tradition which lay behind them. The resurrection of the flesh is not only a biblical teaching, it is also the ultimate affirmation of the rightness of God's plan from the beginning. Much of the treatise is concerned with practical issues, such as the nature of the resurrected flesh, and Tertullian draws heavily on the Apostle Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 15.

The last major anti-heretical work is the treatise *Against Praxeas*, in which Tertullian develops his Trinitarian theology. The identity of Praxeas is uncertain, and the name may be an epithet meaning 'busybody', but whoever he was, he was evidently responsible for convincing the Roman church that the Montanists were in error, and this is what excited Tertullian's wrath. Tertullian's Trinitarianism begins with the assumption that God is One, but that within that One it is necessary to distinguish Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Praxeas appears to be a monarchian rather like Sabellius, believing that these names are no more than masks representing different roles played by the One God in the drama of human history. The Trinity is not a covert form of polytheism, but a faithful reflection of the inner being of God, which can be detected even in the Old Testament.

Praxeas made use of some biblical texts to support his view, but he handled them ineptly. In particular, he completely misunderstood Jesus' statement that 'I and the Father are One' (John 10:30). Tertullian goes through large sections of the Fourth Gospel to show how that verse must be placed in its Trinitarian context, and in the process takes the opportunity to develop his views on the Paraclete, who is the third divine person. Once again, the terminology may be Montanist but the underlying belief is in complete harmony with everything Tertullian wrote and believed from the start of his career.

Two other treatises against heresies may be mentioned briefly. The first is called the *Scorpiace*, or antidote against the scorpion's sting. The scorpion is heresy, and the antidote is the teaching of scripture as summed up in the rule of faith. The second treatise is called simply *Against all Heresies*, and is a short catalogue of the different sects and their beliefs. It is generally regarded as spurious.

The third class of Tertullian's works consists of a group of treatises dealing with different aspects of the Christian life. One of them covers the subject of repentance, which Tertullian says is a supernatural gift applicable in principle to any sin, material or spiritual. It is enjoined on us by God's command, quite apart from the spiritual benefits which accrue from practising it. However, repentance is something which cannot be repudiated without losing one's salvation completely. In particular, it is the essential precondition for baptism, which is not to be undertaken without clear assurances that the candidate has indeed turned away from his sins. Nevertheless, Tertullian holds out the possibility of a second repentance for sins committed after baptism, although he does his best to make such a thing seem as anomalous as possible.

Tertullian's treatise on baptism also belongs in this category, and is of special interest because of his objection to the practice of infant baptism. This was because Tertullian believed that baptism takes effect automatically, regardless of the faith of the person receiving it (a view known as *ex opere operato*), and that a baby ran the risk of growing up and falling ignorantly into sin, thereby losing its salvation. Furthermore, it is in this treatise that Tertullian makes it clear that if someone has sinned after water baptism, the only remedy is the baptism in blood – martyrdom. This theme is not developed here, but it points to the increasingly rigorist position which he, and much of the church, would gradually adopt.

Other treatises in this category are one on prayer, which begins with an exposition of the Lord's Prayer and then concentrates heavily on practical matters, such as the right posture to adopt when praying. The order of priorities sounds strange to us, but it accurately reflects Tertullian's outlook. He was always concerned to demonstrate how spiritual principles should be applied, and there is

no doubt that many people must have been helped by the clear directions which he gives. He also wrote an exhortation addressed to the martyrs, in order to encourage them to stand fast in the face of persecution. The most interesting thing about this is the way in which he draws his examples from the ancient Roman heroes, rather than from the Bible. Perhaps he felt that his hearers would relate to their national traditions more easily than to a scripture which for many would still have been only half-absorbed. This treatise must be read in tandem with another, *On Flight in Persecution*, which deals with the same theme of martyrdom and encourages Christians to face it boldly. Tertullian was determined to turn what many saw as a tragedy into a triumph of faith, and thereby forward the gospel, because, as he himself said, 'the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church'.

Further to these, there is a treatise on patience which extols this virtue as a sign of God's presence in the Christian's life. Impatience is regarded as the work of Satan. Furthermore, Christian patience is active and forward-looking, unlike pagan patience which is basically inertia and indifference, and therefore merely superficial. Apart from a short book on fasting and one which somewhat satirically proclaims the virtues of the philosopher's cloak, the remaining treatises deal with questions relating to women, matrimony and chastity. Like many Christians in antiquity, Tertullian was greatly exercised by these themes, though his way of dealing with them is not without originality.

Tertullian believed that matrimony is ordained by God, but he did not believe in sexual intercourse. His ideal was virginity, of which the noblest form was that of voluntary self-denial. A married couple who abstained for times of prayer and fasting were giving up something to which they were theoretically entitled, and were therefore superior to those who had no obvious opportunity to exercise such restraint. When challenged by the New Testament, which clearly does not support such a view, Tertullian replied that things have moved on since apostolic times. The apostles knew the truth, but they also knew that it was impossible to change people overnight. By a special divine dispensation they were permitted to make concessions, particularly in this sphere. Younger widows were allowed to get married again, for example, and although married women were expected to cover their heads, nothing was said about unmarried virgins.

Tertullian regarded it as his duty to point out that with the coming of the Holy Spirit in power and the announcement of the approaching end of time, these concessions and loopholes must now be closed. Here more than anywhere we can see the influence of Montanism on his thought. He even went to the point of telling his wife that it was better not to conceive, because if Christ were to return before the nine months were up, she would be pregnant in eternity – not a happy prospect. This sounds absurd to us, but underlying much of Tertullian's concern was the fact that ancient Roman religion was a cult of ancestor worship, in which children were necessary in order to guarantee that the parents would be remembered after their death. Against that background, the Christian had to proclaim that eternal life could be had only in Christ, whose church transcended the limitations of flesh and blood.

Tertullian's theology

Tertullian invented the Latin word 'Trinity' as a translation of the Greek word *trias*, and he was the first writer to speak of 'persons' in the Godhead. This caused misunderstanding later on, because it was not clear that a 'person' had the characteristics of autonomous being which were inherent in a 'hypostasis'. The matter was not sorted out until the time of Basil of Caesarea (329–79), who declared that the two concepts were synonymous, a belief which was finally enshrined in the church's official doctrine at the council of Chalcedon. Before that, many people assumed that by 'person' Tertullian meant 'mask', and that his teaching was just a form of Sabellianism (modalism). This would have denied the reality of the persons and reduced them to roles in the divine drama of salvation, a view which Tertullian would certainly have repudiated.

Despite his opposition to Judaism, Tertullian had a high opinion of the Old Testament and rejected attempts to interpret it allegorically. He saw a parallel between the Jews and the Romans,

both of whom had an ancient law to govern them, and he tried to harmonise the two as much as he could. When Jesus told his disciples that their righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20), Tertullian understood this to mean that Christians must be even more legalistic than they were, because the gospel was a 'new law' (*nova lex*).

In other matters, Tertullian's views compare favourably with the orthodoxy of the fourth and fifth centuries. It can be said, for example, that he believed Christ was one divine person in two natures, even though he did not use that precise formula. Similarly, his doctrine of the Holy Spirit can be harmonised with later teaching without any difficulty, even if his way of expressing it is less precise than what later controversies required. Perhaps it is for this reason that he retained his currency as a theologian into the fifth century and was accepted by Jerome and Augustine as an equal. His Montanist affiliations have never been a barrier to appreciating him, even if his eschatology and the rigorism which went with it have long since been abandoned. Today he remains a living voice in the church in a way which cannot be said of his great Greek contemporary, Origen, and he continues to be respected as the founder of western Trinitarianism.

His theology has been the subject of penetrating analysis (Braun 1977; Osborn 1997), but more attention has been paid in recent years to his social and political ideas which give us an insight into life in North Africa, and indeed into the Roman empire, around the year 200 that is otherwise hard to come by. The fact that he wrote on so many topics, and that he did so in a style that is arresting and highly quotable, adds to the continued attractiveness of his work. It is to him that we owe such memorable phrases as 'the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church' and 'what has Athens to do with Jerusalem?' His approach to these questions may not be universally followed today, but the questions themselves remain perennially topical and are still widely discussed, even by people who have no idea where or with whom they originated.

Cyprian

Cyprian was born at Carthage about 200, apparently to a family of wealth and social standing. He became a noted rhetorician, well connected socially and politically, before converting to Christianity under the influence of the presbyter Caecilius (Sage 1975). He was a great admirer of Tertullian, but does not seem to have known him personally. This may be because Tertullian had died before Cyprian's conversion, or because he had separated himself from the church. The latter must be regarded as unlikely, however, since Cyprian's great aversion to division in the church (Hinchliff 1974) is hard to reconcile with admiration for a notorious schismatic. About 248 he became bishop of Carthage, a post which he retained until he was arrested and martyred on 14 September 258.

There are about 13 different works attributed to Cyprian which have survived (the Latin texts are in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 3–4, and in *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* vol. 3; for an English translation, see Wallis 1886). Most of them are short pieces and many reflect the influence of Tertullian. In fact it is no exaggeration to say that apart from the lack of any Montanist tinge and the more irenic style, their content and theology are indistinguishable from the writings of the man Cyprian regarded as his 'master'. On the other hand, he was more inclined to accept allegorical interpretations of the Bible (see Fahey 1971) than Tertullian was, a fact which can be seen from his treatise on the Lord's Prayer, which understands the 'daily bread', for example, as Christ's body given to us in the Eucharist. Cyprian also develops the notion that pagan idols are ancient kings who were worshipped after their death. This is in line with the Roman predilection for ancestor worship, but it is not an idea found in Tertullian. Cyprian also wrote a spiritual autobiography which he addressed to his friend Donatus (not to be confused with the later schismatic of the same name). This anticipates the *Confessions* of Augustine, which it resembles in both style and content, rather than anything which went before.

Cyprian's two most important works are *On the Lapsed* and *On the Unity of the Church*, and it is for them that he is best remembered today. In the first of these, he deals with the vexed question of

penance for those who have fallen away and who wish to be restored to the fellowship of the church. This was always a difficult problem, especially in North Africa, where rigorism was to some extent endemic in the church. Cyprian takes a moderate line, advocating the possibility of penance for the lapsed but discouraging any kind of leniency.

In the second work, he deals with the theme which was closest to his heart. Schism was an ever-present danger and had to be avoided at all costs. This was not just because a persecuted church could not afford the luxury of division, but because the gospel message could only be credible if the church maintained its unity. Truth is one, and if those who maintain it are divided, the credibility of their faith is called into question. Cyprian believed that divisions in the church were the work of Satan, and that rooting them out was therefore part of the mission to purify the body of Christ. He also believed that there is no salvation outside the church, a phrase which has become embedded in later tradition.

This led him to reject the baptism of heretics, a policy which got him into trouble with Rome, which recognised the validity of Trinitarian baptism whoever administered it. The Roman policy would later prevail in the church at large, but Cyprian did not hesitate to differ with his Roman counterparts and reject their understanding of the matter. This shows that he did not accept that the Roman see had any special entitlement to jurisdictional authority, let alone to doctrinal infallibility, merely because it had been the see of Peter. It seems that Cyprian originally included a passage on Petrine primacy as part of chapter 4 of his book on the unity of the church, but deleted it during this controversy in order not to be misunderstood.

There is little more to be said about his theology, which shows few signs of originality. In contrast to Tertullian, he believed that infants should be baptised as soon as possible, so as not to lose their salvation, which probably also means that he was less of a perfectionist than was Tertullian. On the other hand, it cannot be stressed too often that in the ancient church leniency in such matters was rare, and there is no doubt that Cyprian expected high standards of his flock. Another interesting feature of his writings is that he clearly understood the Eucharist in sacrificial terms, which was unusual, though by no means unprecedented in his day.

Today, it is as the teacher of unity that he is most often remembered (Burns 2002). His dictum that there is no salvation outside the church is still officially accepted by the Roman Catholic Church, though in recent years it has been reinterpreted to the point where it is hard to say whether it really means what Cyprian intended it to mean. Other Christians either reject it outright or interpret it in a purely spiritual sense, which was clearly not Cyprian's original intention.

Novatian

Novatian belongs to the first generation at Rome which used Latin as its medium of theological expression. He was a presbyter of the Roman church who was highly regarded as one of the most brilliant men of his day. When Pope Fabian died on 20 January 250, Novatian assumed the direction of the Roman church during the interregnum, which lasted just over a year, during which the church was severely persecuted. When it at last became possible to elect a bishop, the Roman presbyters chose another of their number, Cornelius, much to Novatian's disgust. He managed to gain the support of three bishops in southern Italy who agreed to consecrate him, and set himself up as a rival pope for several years. His followers were numerous and persistent, and there developed a Novatianist schism which lasted for nearly three centuries after his death.

Novatian's end is not recorded, but it is generally supposed that he died a martyr, probably during the persecution of 258. In 1932 a tomb was discovered at Rome honouring the 'blessed martyr Novatian' and this may be his, though there is no indication on it of his episcopal title. It seems that the main reason why Novatian was rejected in 251 was that he took an extremely rigorous line against those who had lapsed during the persecution. Cornelius was in favour of readmitting them after due penance, but Novatian wanted them to be permanently excluded from communion. His attitude smacked of Montanism, and some people apparently assumed that he hailed from Phrygia,

the province in Asia Minor where Montanus had preached. Certainly there are many affinities between him and Tertullian, which are reflected in his writings.

Novatian has left us four treatises (see the Latin texts in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* vol. 3: 861–970 and an English translation in Wallis 1886). Two of his works (on modesty and on theatrical entertainments) are merely versions of similar writings by Tertullian. A third book deals with the Jewish food laws in the Old Testament, which Novatian believed must be understood in a spiritual sense. However, by far his most important work is his treatise *On the Trinity*, which accomplishes the remarkable feat of dealing systematically with that doctrine without ever once mentioning the word 'Trinity' itself – the title was probably added later (see De Simone 1970).

This work was the most systematic of its kind in existence when it first appeared, and it follows the arrangement of the old Roman creed. Novatian gives an entirely conventional exposition of the essence and attributes of God, and has a two-natures Christology without using that terminology. However, there is a noticeable tendency towards subordinationism in his work, which stresses the fundamental unity of the divine being and the eternal immanence of the Logos inside it. Novatian is also rather weak on the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the other persons of the Godhead, though he goes into great detail about the relationship of the Spirit to the church. Like Tertullian, he is important for the vocabulary he uses, and it seems that he is the first person to employ the word 'predestination' as a translation of the Greek *proorismos*. Like Tertullian, his philosophical leanings were towards Stoicism, and this affects his theological method which tends to be inductive and dialectical, rather than deductive in the Platonic style.

Novatian has always been greatly admired for his style and his acute theological perception, and in spite of his schismatic history his works have never been condemned by the church. On the other hand, they are little studied today and he is largely ignored by modern scholarship.

Lactantius

Lactantius is the last of the major pre-Nicene Latin theologians. Little is known of his life except that he is supposed to have been of African origin, with his birthdate around AD 250. In 303 he was teaching at the catechetical school of Nicomedia, in Bithynia, but he resigned in that year when persecution broke out. He apparently left Asia Minor about 307, but no more is heard of him until 317, when he was invited by the Emperor Constantine to go to Trier to tutor his eldest son (see Fontaine and Perrin 1978). Lactantius is often called the Christian Cicero, and his writings are in many ways closer to Ciceronian philosophy than they are to anything distinctively Christian. The Latin texts are in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vols 6 and 7, and they are translated into English by Fletcher (1886).

This is particularly true of his work *On God's Workmanship*, which is a treatise in praise of the human body. It is clearly anti-Platonic in tone, but both the style and content owe more to Roman Stoicism than they do to Christianity. Two other works deal with the anger of God and the death of persecutors. The first of these proclaims that God is active within his creation, and the second assures the reader that he will not be slow to punish those who have persecuted the church.

Lactantius' most important work is his *Divine Institutes*, which is intended to be a complete summary of Christian thought. In this work, Lactantius refutes paganism and all forms of rationalism, claiming that revelation is necessary for the truth to be understood. There is a strong emphasis on providence, rather than on a more personal theology, and Lactantius stresses moral behaviour rather than true spirituality. He seems to have a dualistic view of creation, giving evil much the same status as good. He says little or nothing about the Holy Spirit, and believes that each soul is created at birth. There are also indications that he had millenarian views, though these are less prominent than in other writers of the period.

The *Deaths of the Persecutors* (*c.* 318–21) aims to show that all persecutors meet a bad end, as exemplified by Diocletian, Galerius and Maximinus Daia (see Creed 1984). He was writing just as the age of persecution was drawing to a close, though he could not have known that at the time. Circumstances have ensured that he has gone down in the history of the church as a transitional figure, a man who

was highly educated in the classical style and converted to Christianity before it became a legal religion, but who lived to see the triumph of the cross and the end of the age of martyrdom.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it may be said that the third century saw the rise of an embryonic systematic theology in both the Greek and Latin worlds. During this period there was little interaction between them, and that would lead to misunderstanding later on when different forms of expression were thought to conceal heretical beliefs. It is also true that the greatest theologians, Origen in the east and Tertullian in the west, would prove to be unsatisfactory in the eyes of later generations, though for very different reasons. Origen would come to be regarded as a heretic because of his questionable views on the nature of the soul, and Tertullian would be suspect because of his Montanist sympathies. Yet in spite of this, the broad lines of theological thought which they developed have remained visible ever since in their respective traditions, and they are still fruitful today. Without the theology of this period, forged against the background of a persecuted church, the subsequent history of Christianity would have been very different and undoubtedly poorer both intellectually and spiritually. We owe a permanent debt to these thinkers whose reputation has survived not only the test of time, but also the repudiation of many of their most characteristic opinions.

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30

LATER THEOLOGIANS OF THE GREEK EAST

Andrew Louth

Introduction

The later theologians of the Greek east belong to another world from that of their predecessors. Their predecessors faced the threat, and often the reality, of persecution by a hostile Roman state, while the later Greek theologians lived in a world where Christianity was first tolerated and then gradually became the official religion of the Roman empire. This radical change of orientation posed enormous problems for the Church, ultimately problems of identity. During the first three centuries of its existence, the Church had grown remarkably but still remained a group of relatively small and isolated communities. The long catechumenate that preceded baptism, together with the reality that martyrdom might well be a corollary of being a Christian, gave Christians a strong sense of identity over against the 'world' of the pagan society of the Roman empire. This sense of a tight-knit community was reinforced by celebration of the eucharist reserved for the baptised, excommunication of those who failed in their Christian vocation, by serious moral failing, as well as by apostasy, and the power of the local bishop over the local church. The fourth century CE saw changes that forced Christians to reformulate their sense of identity, or, rather drastically, to adapt the organs of identity they had developed. This was the context in which the later Greek theologians articulated their understanding of Christianity.

One important factor for the development of theology was what one might call the growing 'ecumenicity' of the Church, that is, the sense of the unity of the Church throughout the whole *oikoumene* or 'inhabited world', as the Romans called their empire. The Church had always believed that it was one, but this unity had primarily meant unity with the whole church from Adam onwards, and especially unity with the martyrs who, on their heavenly birthday, as their day of martyrdom was called, had become part of the church in heaven. This 'vertical' sense of unity always entailed a 'horizontal' unity, a unity of faith and communion, articulated through the episcopacy. But in the conditions of persecution this horizontal sense of unity had been difficult to realise, though notable efforts were made from the kind of pastoral care of one church for another manifest in I Clement, through the activity of episcopal meetings, called synods, to the kind of witness to the unity of the Church throughout the Mediterranean world found in Bishop Averkios' famous inscription (Lightfoot 1885: 476–85). (In about the middle of the second century CE, Averkios, the bishop of Hierapolis, in Phrygia, left his episcopal city and visited Rome. On his way home, he travelled through Syria and Mesopotamia, and was received with great honours in various places. Shortly after

Figure 30.1 A cast of the reconstruction of the Epitaph of Averkios, in the Museo della Civiltà Romana in Rome from the original in the Vatican Museums. Photo Wikimedia Commons: author Giovanni Dall'Orto

his return to Hierapolis he died, *c.* 167 CE, but not before composing his epitaph, which conveys a vivid impression of his visit to Rome and return. See Figure 30.1.)

Imperial patronage almost immediately made available to the Church the possibility – or necessity – of undreamt-of horizontal unity. The emperor Constantine felt the need for the united prayers of a united church, and this provided an additional pressure on the Church to seek to articulate its unity. Such unity meant unity of teaching ('doctrinal unity') because Christians had long claimed not just to offer an effective way of religious contact with the divine, but also truth: about God himself (what came to be called *theologia*), and the way He dealt with the world (his management of the world, or *oikonomia*).

The growth of ecumenical authority

Decisions about such matters were made by synods (or councils, but 'synod' was the Christian word),[1] which had already evolved at a local level in the first three centuries. The period from the peace of the Church (312) to 431, the date of the Council of Ephesus, is marked by a series of church synods, three of which were to be recognised as 'ecumenical', that is authoritative for the whole *oikoumene*. Many of the decisions of these synods took the form of 'canons' (as decisions of church law were called) governing the life of the Church, which came to have the force of the Roman legal system,

and through which the Church began to shape the sense of its own identity as the organ of the official religion of the empire. But ecumenical synods (and those that claimed to be ecumenical) were also concerned with doctrinal matters – especially with teaching concerning the trinitarian nature of God and the union of divine and human in Christ – which were central to later Greek theology. The first three synods, which were held at Nicæa in 325, Constantinople in 381 and Ephesus in 431, concerned themselves with these fundamental doctrinal issues (and such concern continued through the rest of the seven synods regarded as ecumenical, the last of which was held in Nicæa in 787).

The first three ecumenical synods mark out the fundamental doctrinal concerns of the Church in the period up to 431. Nicæa I was concerned with the status of the Son of God in relation to the Father; Constantinople I ostensibly with the divinity of the Spirit, and the beginning of discussion over the nature of the union of divine and human in Christ, but perhaps more fundamentally with reaffirming Nicæa as the standard for the religious orthodoxy that the Emperor Theodosius wanted to make the sole system of valid belief for the empire; and Ephesus was concerned with the central Christological issue (not finally settled until the Third Synod of Constantinople in 680–1), that of affirming the unity of Christ, while acknowledging the reality and integrity of his divine and human natures.

Nicæa and the doctrine of God

The synod of Nicæa was called to settle a dispute between the pope of Alexandria, Alexander, and one of his presbyters, Arius.[2] There are differing accounts in the Church historians about the precise origins of the dispute, but the nature of the dispute is clear, and concerned how to understand the relationship between God the Father and the Son of God. Behind the ideas of them both lay earlier attempts to understand this relationship by the Apologists and especially by Origen, attempts that revolved round the notion of the *Logos*.

Pre-Nicene theology

Earlier theologians had thought of the *Logos* as mediating between the inaccessible simplicity of God the Father and the multiplicity of the world; they had invoked the *Logos* as the subject of the theophanies of the Old Testament, and as incarnate in Jesus Christ. They also thought of the *Logos* as lying behind the harmonious structure of the world, and the human capacity to perceive this harmony as due to human participation in the *Logos*, a participation that rendered them *logikoi*, or rational. As an inbetween being, the *Logos* had a shifting valency, his closeness to God the Father being affirmed when it was a matter of emphasising the genuineness of his manifestation of God; his closeness to the human being asserted when his role in validating human understanding (not least of God) was emphasised. Within Origen's whole theological ontology, this shifting valency was simply a matter of emphasis. For Origen endorsed one of the fundamental tenets of Platonist metaphysics, according to which the most important ontological distinction was that between the spiritual (or *noetic*) world and the world of the senses, the former being eternal, the latter transitory. To the spiritual world belonged God the Father, the *Logos*, and rational beings, the *logikoi* (which included not just humans, but angels and demons too). Origen's doctrine of the eternal generation of the *Logos* affirmed his closeness to the Father, but did not distinguish him fundamentally from the *logikoi*, who also partook of eternity.

From the beginning of the fourth century, however, it was becoming more clearly perceived that the doctrine of creation out of nothing applied to all beings apart from God, including spiritual beings. With this perception, Origen's pattern of teaching lost something of its coherence. Both Arius' doctrine and Alexander's can be seen as ways of recovering coherence. Alexander affirms the coeternity of the *Logos* with the Father, while Arius rejects any doctrine of the *Logos*' inherent eternity, and places him among the beings created out of nothing. The writings of both Arius and

Alexander are preserved only in fragmentary form, so it is difficult to form any impression of their overall doctrine, but Arius is perhaps the more radical of the two and is one of the first to affirm what was to become the central tenet of Christian metaphysics, namely the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*.

Arius

For Arius, everything other than God himself, that is the Father, is created out of nothing by the will of God: the fundamental ontological divide is between the uncreated God and the creation. That the *Logos* (or the Son, as he generally calls him) must belong on the created side of the divide is entailed by his monotheism, his belief that there is one God; several uncreated beings would entail several gods. But though created, the Son is different from all other creatures in being the 'Only-begotten', the first of God's creatures, through whom all other creatures have been created. Arius is often presented (also by his contemporaries) as a cold logician, in contrast to the ardent faith, tolerant of logical muddle, that characterises the orthodox. That may well be unfair (as it also is to the orthodox). For although Arius emphasises the radical divide that separates the Son from the Father – the Son does not know the Father, he is foreign to the Father – so far as humans are concerned, the Son represents all they can know of the Father, he is a faithful image of the Father, and through the Son humans can approach the Father and offer him true worship. A glimpse of the devotional theology that this implies can be seen in the sermon Eusebius of Caesarea gave at the consecration of the Christian basilica in Tyre after the end of the persecution:

> [t]he worship of the church on earth led by the bishop in his basilica is a copy of the worship of the Church in heaven led by Christ Himself. We worship God as God made manifest to us, and through Him worship the Father of all.[3]

Nicæa and the homoousion

Arius was condemned at the synod of Nicæa in 325 CE for refusing assent to a creed, drawn up by the synod, that included the keyword *homoousios*, consubstantial, 'one in being', to describe the relationship of the Son to the Father; this relationship was also described as being 'out of the being of the Father', and called being begotten, in explicit contrast to being created. It is not clear how the creed was drawn up, or why the word *homoousios* was used, though Arius had already rejected the term as 'Manichaean' (materialist, in this context?).[4] Neither is it clear what the fathers of the synod made of the term. Eusebius of Cæsarea gives the only contemporary interpretation, which is minimalist.[5] After the death of Constantine in 337, a series of synods called over the next two decades makes it clear there was little support in the east for the doctrine of the *homoousion*, and even Athanasius rarely uses the term, save in connection with the Nicene synod, until the late 360s. The eventual victory for the 'Nicene' doctrine of the *homoousion* is due in large measure to the efforts of Athanasius and the Cappadocian Fathers.[6]

Athanasius

Athanasius was a young deacon, accompanying his bishop Alexander of Alexandria, at the synod of Nicæa, and probably played little part in the proceedings of the synod, despite later claims to the contrary (see Chapter 53 of this work). In 328 he succeeded Alexander as pope of Alexandria; by then he was probably barely thirty, as there were claims that he was under the canonical age. He spent the rest of his life administering his huge diocese, when he was not in exile for his opposition to imperial religious policy, which in the east abandoned Nicæa from the death of Constantine until the accession of Theodosius in 389. His writings, therefore, are far from systematic; it is, however, possible to discern in them the outline of a profound theological vision, which it is fair to say was to cast its spell over nearly all later Greek theology.

His theological vision

This vision is expressed in Athanasius' two-part treatise, *Contra Gentes-De Incarnatione*.[7] The first part is in the tradition of apologetic, that is a defence of Christianity against Greek philosophical culture; the second part is more deeply theological. More precisely, both parts of the treatise present a defence of the cross (proving that Christ was 'the Saviour of the universe and that the cross was not the ruin but the salvation of creation' [*CG* 1]; reaffirmed by the allusion to 1 Cor. 1:22–4 in *Inc.* 1),[8] the treatise as a whole establishing an overall contemplative context: the human person is created to contemplate God, contemplation itself being a transforming activity (as with Origen, one is what one contemplates). This contemplative dimension of human existence is founded on the fact that humans are created, *kat' eikona tou Theou*, according to the image of God, which Athanasius takes to mean, following most earlier Greek theologians, that human beings are created in accordance with the *Logos*, who is himself the image of God. Humans are 'in the image', because they are *logikoi*, rational, and thus it is in the soul or intellect that the image is principally to be found (*CG* 2; *Inc.* 3). The soul functions as a kind of mirror (*CG* 8, 34) in which one can see reflected the image of God, that is the Word, and through contemplation of the Word, one is led to contemplate the original, of which the Word is the image, that is the Father.

But – and here Athanasius parts company with Origen and pursues the insight he shares with his opponent, Arius – human beings are *created* in the image of God, and for Athanasius, as for Arius, this means created out of nothing, *ex nihilo* (cf. *Inc.* 2–3). Athanasius explores deeply the meaning of being created. On the one hand, being created out of nothing means that there is nothing as such in being created that is opposed to God; in its relationship with God there is no limit to what it may become, indeed the goal of creation (at least rational creation) is deification, becoming God. This establishes the fundamental arc of Greek theology, an arc that passes from creation to deification, and within which everything else – including the Fall and redemption – has a subordinate place. But there is another side to being created, for being created out of nothing means that once the creature loses hold of its relationship to the Creator, it loses hold on being itself and begins to slip into non-existence. This indeed happened to the human creation, and this is what is meant by the Fall. Fallen creation slides into non-existence; it falls prey to what Athanasius calls corruption and death, *phthora* and *thanatos*, which stalk through the pages of *de Incarnatione* like a couple of avenging furies. This is a corruption of what things are, of their being or nature; it is not a superficial rust (*Inc.* 44). In human beings, this corruption eats into the state of being in the image of God (the *kat' eikona*, as Athanasius puts it), which begins to disappear (Athanasius uses the verb in the imperfect): this negative corrosion ultimately leads to death. Contemplation of God fails (Athanasius suggests that contemplation in fallen creatures is directed to the nothingness of creatures, instead of God), and human beings cease to know God. Lack of knowledge of God and a nature dissolving through corruption: this is the result of the Fall. And Athanasius argues that only the embracing of humanity, that is the living of a human life to the point of death, by the Word who is in himself the image of God can arrest the effects of the Fall. The Word made flesh came and preached and thus restored the knowledge of God; more fundamentally, by assuming humanity he restored the image, in accordance with which we were created; more fundamentally still, by encountering death in his humanity he destroyed the power of death, and manifested the 'grace of the resurrection' (*Inc.* 21). Everything in Athanasius' mature theology can be traced back to the theological vision outlined in this work.

Athanasius' understanding of the homoousion

In his works against the Arians, Athanasius worked out an understanding of the *homoousion* that was to be determinative for later orthodoxy. But it is clear from his writings that only gradually did the language of the *homoousion* come to form part of his own theological vocabulary. What was fundamental for Athanasius was to acknowledge that the Son (and eventually the Spirit) belonged with the

Father as uncreated beings. For him the *homoousion* was fundamentally relational: the Son was to be confessed as *homoousios with* the Father, which he understood as expressing 'full unbroken continuation of being' (Stead 1977: 263, quoting Robertson). But this could be expressed in a variety of ways, of which the *homoousion* was simply one. The reason for this insistence on the uncreated status of the Son was twofold. First, like Arius, he saw that creation *ex nihilo* implies that the fundamental division of Christian metaphysics is between the uncreated and the created; there is no inbetween. Second, the Son could only repair the consequences of the Fall, which saw the whole created order sliding into nothingness, if he were himself uncreated; any creature would be implicated in the Fall. Further, and perhaps more fundamentally, only God can deify; anything less than God would represent a limit to the potentially limitless movement of deification. The purpose of the Incarnation, then, is not simply to redeem, but to deify: 'he became human, that we might be deified' (*Inc.* 54). A consequence of the Son being uncreated, *homoousios* with the Father, is the need to define and defend the unity of God: does the existence of two uncreated beings mean, as Arius argued, the denial of monotheism? Athanasius clearly thought not, neither did he think that the divine unity demanded by monotheism could be secured by arguing that the uncreated divine beings were one in purpose, harmony or will. Rather, Athanasius argues that the unity of Father and Son is to be found on the ontological level. But he expresses this by using traditional analogies and arguments: the Son is to the Father as radiance to the sun, or a river flowing from a spring; the very notion of Father implies a Son; the Son is the Father's wisdom, or the Father's will. He makes use of more formal ontological language, but not systematically, mentioning the 'oneness of being (*ousia*)' manifesting the 'sameness of Godhead', and affirming that the nature (*physis*) the Father and the Son share is one (*Contra Arianos* 3.3–4). Athanasius' success in fighting against those he (somewhat unfairly) regarded as 'Arians' was sealed by the synod he called at Alexandria in 362 (taking advantage of the truce for exiled bishops declared by the emperor Julian), when he secured agreement between those eastern bishops, like himself, who saw little difference between the terms *ousia* and *hypostasis*, and understood both to refer to the unity of the Godhead, and other eastern bishops (who may be called 'Origenian' in this respect) who used the term *hypostasis* to refer to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in their distinctness. There were those who refused to accept this – 'Homœans', who believed that the Son was like the Father and who retained the political ascendancy for another decade or so and 'Anomœans', who believed that the Son was unlike the Father – but they failed to withstand the Cappadocian defence of orthodoxy, that built on Athanasius' achievement at Alexandria in 362.

Athanasius and the Holy Spirit

Athanasius' neglect of the Spirit is remedied in his anti-Arian writings, an example being the way in which the famous assertion of *de Incarnatione*, quoted above, linking incarnation and deification, is reformulated in *de Decretis* to read: 'For "the Word became flesh", that he might offer this on behalf of all, and that we, participating in his Spirit, might be capable of deification' (*de Decretis* 14). But it was only towards the end of the 350s that Athanasius addressed the question of the Holy Spirit directly. The creed adopted by the synod of Nicæa had merely affirmed the existence of the Spirit, and there seems to have been little concern about the nature and status of the Spirit in the ensuing controversy over the adequacy of the dogmatic decision of that synod. The issue was raised by those whom Athanasius calls *Tropici*, that is those, he argued, who interpreted Scripture allegorically (or 'tropologically') in order to evade the teaching of Scripture on the Holy Spirit. (They were later called Pneumatomachoi, or 'Spirit-fighters', or Macedonians, after Macedonius, archbishop of Constantinople *c.* 342–60 CE, about whom we know little.) In truth, as St Gregory Nazianzen was to acknowledge, the witness of Scripture to the Holy Spirit is by no means straightforward. The *Tropici* maintained that the Holy Spirit was a creature, one of the 'ministering spirits' mentioned in Hebrews (1:14). In essence, Athanasius' response is to extend the arguments he had already used to establish the divinity of the Son in his anti-Arian writings to the case of the Holy Spirit, whom he called the

'Image of the Son' (*Letter to Serapion* [= *Serap*], 1.24). He argues that the Holy Spirit belongs to the uncreated side of the primal divide between the uncreated and the created: he is from God, not *ex nihilo*. His titles – life-giving (*zōopoion*), unction and seal – demonstrate his role in deification and therefore his uncreated, divine status (*Serap*. 1.23). Athanasius also extends to the Spirit the epithet *homoousion* (*Serap*. 1.27; 3.1).

The apparent neglect of the life of faith in *de Incarnatione* is amply compensated in his formal ascetic writings (cf. Brakke 1995), and in the festal letters sent to his clergy and people each year in preparation for Easter. From these it is clear that for Athanasius the Incarnation invites and demands a response that includes faith and a strenuous attempt to respond to God's offer of grace by fighting against temptation and growing in the virtues.

The Cappadocian Fathers

The Cappadocian Fathers – Basil ('the Great') of Cæsarea (modern Kayseri in Turkey),[9] his friend Gregory of Nazianzus ('the Theologian'),[10] and his younger brother Gregory of Nyssa, to whom should be added Macrina, the elder sister of Basil and Gregory, of whose teaching we know through Gregory's devotion to her – built on the achievement of Athanasius and were instrumental in formulating and defending the Nicene orthodoxy that was made the religious ideology of the Roman empire at the synod of Constantinople, called by Theodosius in 381. The depth of their admiration for Athanasius can be gauged from Gregory Nazianzen's panegyric 'on the Great Athanasius' (*Oration* 21). They are often called 'Neo-Nicenes', with the implication that what they called Nicene orthodoxy was something other than the doctrine of the Synod of 325. Their theology is certainly more developed, both in terms of trinitarian theology and Christology, but the widespread assumption that they owe more to the so-called 'homœousian' party, who in the late 350s advanced the belief that the Son was of similar substance (*homoiousios*) to the Father, instead of *homoousios*, needs to be challenged. There are two reasons for this widespread belief: first, Basil's association with homœousian circles through his (then) friendship with Eustathius of Sebaste (Rousseau 1994: 98–9); second, the conviction that Athanasius' understanding of the *homoousion* is to be interpreted as expressing a doctrine of 'numerical unity of substance', with which the Cappadocian doctrine cannot be reconciled. The latter characterisation of Athanasius' doctrine has been refuted conclusively by Professor Stead (1977: 260–6). The former point runs the risk of attributing guilt by association, but is sometimes supported by appeal to the alleged early correspondence between Basil and the then revered defender of Nicene orthodoxy, Apollinaris of Laodicea (*Epistles* 361–4), in which Basil, as an homœousian, sought advice from Apollinaris about the meaning of the *homoousion*. But even if the correspondence is genuine (and there is no agreement on this: cf. Fedwick 1981: 6, n. 23), it would seem that Apollinaris convinced Basil, as a genuine letter of Basil's (*Ep*. 9 to Maximus the philosopher), written shortly afterwards, defends an authentically Athanasian understanding of the *homoousion*.

The Cappadocian contribution to theology, in the widest sense, is enormous. They were all committed to the ascetic movement of the fourth century, and Basil, in particular, is a fundamental figure for eastern monasticism, not least through his misleadingly entitled 'Rules'. The Cappadocian Fathers, not least Macrina, are also important in the history of the Christian incorporation of the values and ideas of classical, hellenic culture (cf. Pelikan 1993). Gregory Nazianzen (see Figure 30.2) was a prolific poet (especially in his last decade), and Gregory of Nyssa wrote compellingly on the personal transformation that faithful pursuit of the Christian life entails (what is often called 'mysticism'). All of them shared an understanding of the human person as being on the border between uncreated and created being by virtue of being created in the image of God, and exercising a mediatorial role as a kind of little cosmos (*mikros kosmos*), in which the great cosmos of the created order is reflected and contained. But we shall be mainly concerned here with their contribution to the development of the fundamental doctrines of the Trinity and Christology.

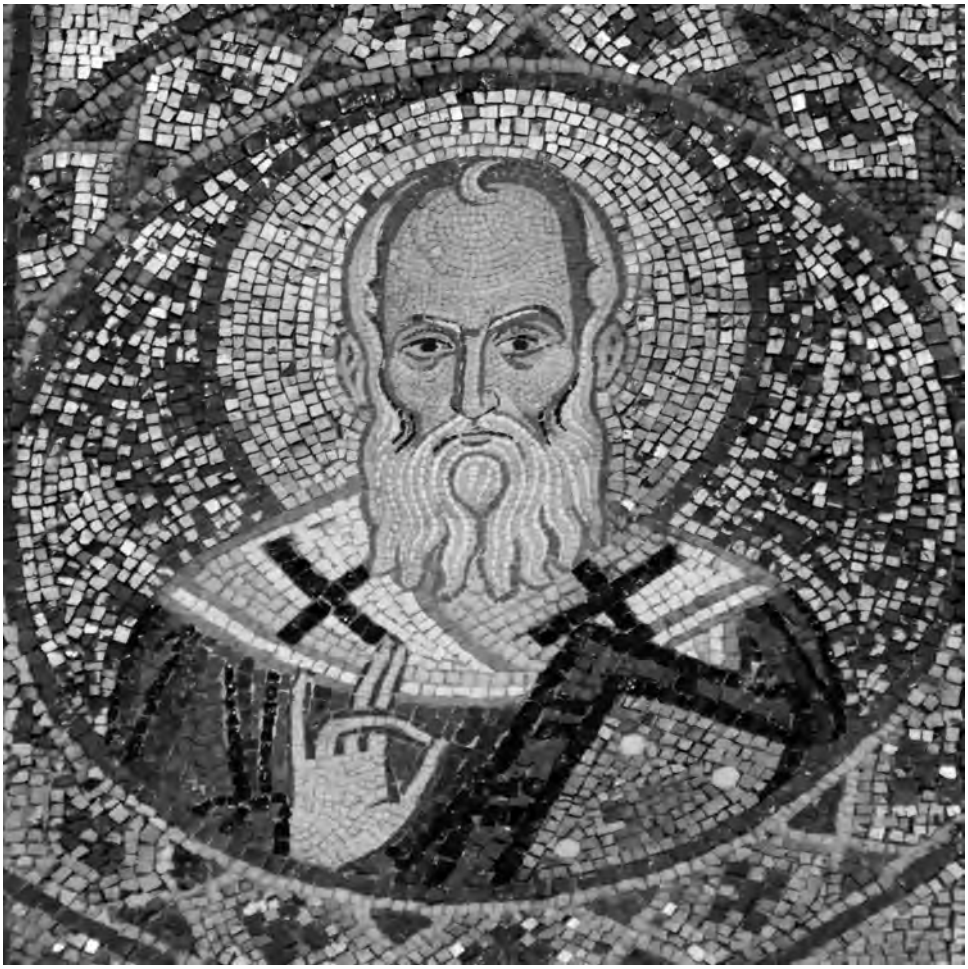

Figure 30.2 Twelfth-century mosaic of Gregory Nazianzen, Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio in Palermo, Sicily. Photo Wikimedia Commons; Jastrow

The Cappadocians and the unknowability of God

Fundamental to Cappadocian theology is their conviction of the radical unknowability of God. In one of his letters to his friend and fellow-bishop, Amphilochius of Iconium, Basil insists that though God reveals himself through his activities, in his essence he remains unknowable: 'We say that from his activities (*energeiōn*) we know our God, but we do not undertake to approach the essence (*ousia*) itself. For his activities descend to us, but his essence remains unapproachable'. It is precisely this incomprehensibility that inspires our reverence and worship:

> [k]nowledge of the divine essence is the sense of his incomprehensibility; and what inspires our worship is not what the essence is comprehended as being, but that it is at all . . . Therefore, from the activities comes knowledge, and from knowledge worship (*ep.* 234).

The second of Gregory Nazianzen's 'Theological Orations' (*Or.* 28) is devoted to the subject of God's ineffability. But perhaps the profoundest exploration among the Cappadocians of the unknowability

of God is found in Gregory of Nyssa. For him, God's unknowability is a consequence of ontological divide between the uncreated Trinity and the created order; because of this divide there is nothing in common between God and creature, and thus God is utterly unknowable to the creature. It follows from this, Gregory argues, that the closer the creature comes to God in himself, the more he is aware of God's incomprehensibility: coming close to God is to enter darkness. As the soul seeks God in himself:

> [i]t goes always towards the more inward, until by the activity of the intellect it arrives at the invisible and the incomprehensible and there it sees God. For the true knowledge and seeing of what we seek consists in this, in not seeing, because that which we seek transcends all knowledge, cut off, as it were, on every side by incomprehensibility, as by a thick cloud.
>
> *(*de Vita Moysis *[*= Moses*] 2. 163)*

This implies that the soul, in its search for God, is engaged on an endless quest:

> For no limit can be conceived in a boundless nature. And the limitless cannot by nature be understood. But every desire towards the beautiful which draws us on in this ascent is intensified by the very progress towards the beautiful. And this is truly to see God: never to have this desire satisfied.
>
> *(*Moses *2. 238–9)*[11]

Opposition to Anomœanism

This Cappadocian conviction of the radical unknowability of God was deepened by their engagement with Anomœanism, the doctrine, promoted especially by Eunomius, who was briefly bishop of Cyzikus in 360, at the height of the power of the radical opponents of Nicæa. According to this doctrine, the Son is unlike the Father. Eunomius' defence of this doctrine, of which only fragments now survive in the refutations of him principally by Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, was expressed in terms of considerable philosophical sophistication, and continued to engage the minds of the Cappadocian Fathers, and also of St John Chrysostom,[12] until the 380s. Part of Eunomius' case, it was alleged, was that the simplicity of God's nature entailed that 'God does not know anything more about his own essence than we do' (cf. Vaggione 1987: 167–73, 179). Against this the orthodox tirelessly asserted God's ineffability. The earliest of Basil's theological works was directed against Eunomius (Sesboüé *et al.* 1982–3). Gregory of Nyssa also composed a series of responses to Eunomius' defence against Basil's attack (the first written just after Basil's death), and a response to Eunomius' 'Confession of Faith', submitted to Emperor Theodosius (all these constitute Gregory's *Contra Eunomium*);[13] the third and fourth of Gregory Nazianzen's 'Theological Orations', *Or.* 29–30, also attacked Eunomius.

***Being and person:* ousia *and* hypostasis**

More important than the details of the Cappadocian response to Eunomius was the terminology Basil formulated, which soon won universal acceptance in the Greek east, for expressing the doctrine of the Trinity. As noted above, the synod of Alexandria in 362 had accepted that different use of the terminology of *ousia* and *hypostasis* did not necessarily entail different doctrines. Basil's proposal was to agree to use these two words differently, using *ousia* to express the unity of the Godhead, and *hypostasis* to express the distinct members of the Trinity. In two letters written in 375, Basil introduces the distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis*:

> *Ousia* has the same relationship to *hypostasis* as the common (*koinon*) has to the particular (*idion*). For each of us participates in existence by the common term *ousia*, and is such a one by his own properties. So there (*kakei*: in the Godhead) the term *ousia* is common, such as goodness, divinity, or any other notion, while the *hypostasis* is beheld in the property of fatherhood, or of sonship, or of sanctifying power.
>
> (ep. *214)*

He insists that *hypostasis* is a better word than *prosōpon*, used by the Sabellians, since *hypostasis* has ontological connotations, absent from *prosōpon*. He also comments that western Christians should also accept this, even though their own terminology confuses the terms (since the Latin *substantia*, used to translate *ousia*, is literally equivalent to *hypostasis*): with typical Greek hauteur, he puts this confusion down to the 'poverty of their language'. Basil is often accused of (or credited with) introducing an Aristotelian distinction, but there is nothing more than a general similarity of concept between Basil's distinction and Aristotle's distinction between first and second substance in *Categories* 5. We need to recall Basil's conviction of God's fundamental ineffability: this is an analogy that gives us a glimpse of the nature of the Trinity, not a rigorous distinction from which we can make logical deductions. It is worth noting that one reason Basil advances for making this distinction is: 'for unless the mind is free from confusion over the properties of each [of the persons], it will be impossible to complete the doxology to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit' (*ep*. 210). Such precision is necessary for worship.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Basil

The doxology to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit was at the heart of a controversy that produced from Basil one of his greatest works, his treatise *On the Holy Spirit*.[14] This was written in the mid 370s, almost twenty years after Athanasius' letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit. But despite the later date, it is much less explicit on the nature and status of the Holy Spirit than Athanasius had been: Basil does not call the Spirit God, much less use the term *homoousion*. Central to the controversy was the form of the doxology, whether it should have the form, 'Glory to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit', or, 'Glory to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit' (in *Spirit* 1. 3 he speaks of this latter form as concluding 'with the Son and with the Holy Spirit'). Basil insists that both are to be used, because the former makes clear the order of the divine persons in the *oikonomia* of salvation, while the latter ranks the three persons together as equal.

But Basil's reticence in making his doctrine of the Spirit explicit caused something of a scandal among those committed to the orthodoxy for which the Cappadocians were fighting; we learn of this both from one of Gregory Nazianzen's letters (*ep*. 58) and his panegyric on Basil (*Or*. 43). In both cases, Gregory defends his friend by distinguishing between what one can confess in private and what it is wise to confess in public. This corresponds exactly to a distinction Basil himself makes in the course of *On the Holy Spirit* between *kerygma*, the public teaching of the Church, and *dogma*, the deeper meaning of the experience of the life of faith: '*Dogma* is one thing, *kerygma* another; the one is kept silent, while the *kerygmata* are proclaimed publicly' (*Spirit* 27. 66). The distinction between *kerygma* and *dogma* corresponds to the distinction between the 'written teaching' and 'what is handed down to us secretly (*en mysteriō[i]*) in the tradition of the apostles'. This latter is no whispered message, but liturgical practices like the sign of the cross, eastward-facing prayer, the eucharistic invocation; also the 'obscurity that surrounds the Scriptures making the meaning of its doctrines difficult for the profit of its readers' is a 'form of silence'. What Basil perhaps means is that the doctrine of the divinity of the Holy Spirit is not something that can be grasped apart from its being experienced, an experience that takes place primarily in participation in the Church's liturgy. At any rate,

Basil's reticence over explicitly affirming the divinity of the Spirit is reflected in the clause added to the confession of the Holy Spirit in the creed drawn up at the synod of Constantinople in 381, which restricts itself to ranking the Spirit with the Father and the Son in worship and glorification (Tanner 1990: 24), though the letter of the Synod to Pope Damasus, summing up its achievements, is more explicit (Tanner 1990: 28).

Gregory Nazianzen

Basil's reticence was not shared by his friend, Gregory Nazianzen, who asserts clearly in his fifth 'Theological Oration', 'What then? Is the Spirit God? Yes, indeed. Is he *homoousios*? Yes, if he is God' (*Or.* 31.10). But Gregory, too, knows that the divinity of the Holy Spirit is less clear from the Scriptures than that of the Father or the Son, and also agrees with Basil that the real demonstration of the Spirit is found in the life of the Church:

> The Old Testament proclaimed the Father clearly, and the Son more obscurely. The New Testament makes clear the Son, and indicates the divinity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit lives among us, providing us with the clearest revelation of himself.
>
> *(*Or. *31.26)*

Gregory advances beyond his friend in other ways. Basil's distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* as parallel to that between common and the particular raised the question as to what were the particular features that distinguished Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Basil suggested, as we have seen above, fatherhood, sonship and sanctifying power (in *ep*. 236 Basil derives these *idiōmata* or *charaktēres* from the opening words of each clause of the creed). But what kind of particular features are these? Furthermore, is sanctifying power really distinctive of the Spirit; surely it could be ascribed to Father or Son? Gregory's contribution is first to identify such a particular feature as a relationship (*schēsis*): '"father" is the name neither of an essence nor of an activity, but of a relationship or manner of being that holds between the father and the son' (*or.* 29.16). Fatherhood and sonship, then, are to be seen as relationships. What of the Holy Spirit? For Gregory, the relationship that identifies the Spirit is that mentioned in John 15:26: procession (*ekporeusis*: *or.* 31.8). The Son is begotten from the Father; the Spirit proceeds from the Father. In that way, Gregory turned the jibe of the pneumatomachians that inclusion of the Spirit within the Godhead would make him either the Son's twin (if the Spirit was derived from the Father) or the Father's grandson (*or.* 31.7–8). But what these terms, begetting and procession, mean in themselves when used of the Godhead is beyond our comprehension.

The Cappadocians and Messalianism

There is perhaps more to this combination of reticence about the Spirit and a sense of the power of the Spirit's presence than appears on the surface of the historical record. The period of the Cappadocian struggle for Nicene orthodoxy overlapped with the period when we first begin to hear of the so-called 'Messalians', a word derived from the Syriac meaning 'those who pray' (in Greek, *Euchites*).[15] The Messalians were accused of neglecting the sacramental life of the Church and its hierarchy, and placing all their faith in prayer to the Holy Spirit, who, it was believed, would descend on those who sought him and transform them, granting them that serenity and freedom from temptation that was called *apatheia* in the language of Greek ascetic theology. They were condemned at synods held in Antioch in Syria and Side in Pamphylia in the 380s or 390s, and also at the Third Ecumenical Synod at Ephesus in 431. Despite this official condemnation, they exercised considerable influence in orthodox circles. Their influence is most evident in the collections of homilies ascribed to Macarius of Egypt, which were treasured in orthodox circles, but they also made an impact on the Cappadocian Fathers, at least on the two brothers. Chapter 9 of Basil's *On the Holy Spirit,* a chapter that forms an

interlude between the two parts of the treatise and constitutes an encomium on the Holy Spirit in which have been detected echoes of Plotinus, circulated separately as part of the Macarian literature (Haykin 1994: 106), and Gregory of Nyssa's *de Instituto Christiano* is in part dependent on the 'Great Letter' of Macarius (Staats 1968). It may be that Basil and others felt pulled in different directions by this enthusiastic movement: keen to acknowledge the experience of the Spirit, but reluctant to play into the hands of those who appealed to the Spirit against the episcopal hierarchy and the sacraments – precisely the context in which Basil locates the experience of the Spirit.[16]

The defining of orthodoxy

The purpose of the Synod of Constantinople held in 381 was to place the seal on the restoration of Nicene orthodoxy. By this time Basil was dead, but the two Gregories played important roles in the synod. Gregory Nazianzen had a significant part, as the pastor of the orthodox congregation at the church of Anastasia, in the preparation for the synod, but the synod was, for him, a political disaster. His appointment as archbishop of Constantinople was opposed on the grounds that it would mean translation from his see of Sasima, the 'utterly dreadful and cramped little settlement', of which Basil had had him consecrated bishop against his will, and where he had never resided. Deposed, Gregory left for his family estate and his literary activity. For Gregory of Nyssa, on the contrary, the synod marked the beginning of prominence as one of the official spokesmen for imperial orthodoxy. One of his works belonging to this period is his *Catechetical Oration*,[17] perhaps the first attempt to present a systematic account of Christian doctrine since Origen's *On First Principles*. The first four chapters concern the doctrine of God the Trinity, and it is perhaps worth giving an outline here, as this passage was to have a lasting influence on eastern theology, as it formed the basis for the exposition of the doctrine of God in St John Damascene's *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*.

Gregory begins by presenting Christian teaching as a middle way between pagan polytheism and Jewish monotheism. He starts by arguing for the existence of a single divine power (*dynamis*), 'manifest in the [harmony of the cosmos] and transcendent over the all' (*Cat*. prol), against the dispersed divinity of paganism. He then goes on to say, against Judaism, that 'the doctrine of piety is able to see a certain distinction of *hypostasis* in the unity of the [divine] nature' (*Cat*. 1), and argues for the existence in God of *Logos*. His argument is based on the analogy of the human being's uttering of a word, but whereas everything about the human is transitory, and so our word is passing, 'the incorruptible and eternally enduring nature has a word that is everlasting and subsistent' (ibid.). Briefly, he sketches out the qualities of the *Logos*, that it is free and a power that works unerringly towards the good, for which reason the world, created by the *Logos*, is good, too. He argues that a *Logos* is different from that of which it is the *Logos*, and yet this difference is not a matter of nature (*physis*), so that all the properties that we ascribe to God – goodness, power, wisdom, eternity – lead us both to the Father, and to 'the *Logos* that subsists from out of him' (ibid.). Chapter 2 argues that just as by analogy we have been able to discern the existence of God's *Logos* from the human word, so in the case of the Holy Spirit we can discern 'certain shadows and likenesses of the ineffable nature in ourselves'. He pursues this by seeing an analogy in the breath (*pneuma*) that gives force to our words (in this probably picking up Basil's idea of the Spirit as the 'breath of [God's] mouth', developed in *Spirit* 16.38). Chapter 3 sums up this middle way, while stressing the 'inexpressible depth of mystery' that we are venturing into:

> The unity of nature survives from the assumptions of the Jews, the distinction into *hypostaseis* from paganism, each being healed mutually by the other from their irreverent opinions. For it is as if the number of the triad is a remedy for those who err concerning the one, while the doctrine of unity is a remedy for those dispersed into multiplicity.
>
> *(*Cat. *3)*

Chapter 4 derives all this from Scripture by an exegesis of Ps. 32:6: 'by the word of the Lord were the heavens established, and all their power by the breath of his mouth'.

There are several points worth noting about this exposition. First, it starts from the single divine power manifest in the world that makes clear the unity of God; it is from the unity of God (the Father) that Gregory proceeds to develop the doctrine of the Trinity. Second, although Gregory is clearly aware of his brother's distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* (indeed, the most elaborate discussion of this distinction, preserved as *Ep*. 38 in Basil's correspondence, is most likely by Gregory of Nyssa himself), he makes use of this distinction in quite an informal way, and (probably because he starts from the divine *dynamis*) uses the term *physis* in preference to *ousia*. And third, the analogy from which he develops his doctrine of the Trinity is drawn from the human being as a whole, soul and body, not from the spiritual side of human nature, as if that were in some way closer to God.

. . . and heresy

A clear exposition of the faith, in creed and treatise, was clearly an important part of the project of defining imperial orthodoxy. The other side of that project was the categorising and condemnation of error, which was fulfilled in the work of Epiphanius, bishop of Constantia (ancient Salamis, near modern Famagusta) in Cyprus. In his own life, he was active in the exposing of heresy, not least Origenism, but his main contribution to Theodosius' enterprise of establishing Christian Orthodoxy was his *Panarion*, in which he summarised and refuted eighty heresies, from the time of Adam to his own time, providing thereby a kind of genealogy of heresy.

The Cappadocians and Christology

The background to the problem

But clarification about the co-equal divinity of Father, Son and Spirit only rendered more acute the problem of understanding how divinity and humanity could be united in the person of Christ. The theologians of the second and third centuries had tended to suggest that the Godhead perceived in Christ was itself a mediator between the supreme Godhead of the Father and the human condition. Arius had called into question what could be meant by such mediation, if God were Creator, and solved the problem by making the Only-begotten God, manifest in Jesus, the supreme creature. The eventual triumph of Nicene orthodoxy left the Christological problem posed in stark terms: in Christ were united human nature and the divine nature of the Son, co-equal with the Father. Two trends can be seen in the theology of the later fourth century. The first, already clearly stated in Athanasius, held firmly to the full divinity of the Son, and sees in the Incarnation the amazing paradox of God living a human life, a paradox that is a measure of God's immeasurable love for humankind. The second trend kept the two natures apart, for fear lest the integrity of either be affected by the presence of the other. (The two tendencies are often called, not altogether satisfactorily, Word-flesh and Word-man – *Logos-sarx* and *Logos-anthrōpos* – christologies: see especially Grillmeier 1975.) The dangers of the first trend, with its stress on the unity of Christ, for in him God was living a human life, were soon to be manifest.

Apollinarianism

Apollinaris of Laodicea, a friend of Athanasius, who had openly proclaimed his support for him and his theological stance by welcoming him and sharing communion with him on his return from exile in 346, was the first we know of to reveal these dangers. Only fragments of his works remain, but from these it can be argued that Apollinaris, in his reflections on Christ, was simply thinking through

the implications of Athanasius' approach to Christology (these parallels are more telling than the fact, often mentioned, that Athanasius never unambiguously asserts that Christ had a human soul). For instance, in *Against the Arians* 3.30, Athanasius asserts that '[The Word] became man, he did not come into a man', and goes on to explain that 'coming into a man' is what happened in the case of the prophets, whereas 'becoming a man' refers to the Incarnation. Three fragments (preserved in Gregory of Nyssa's *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarium*) are perhaps reflections on this distinction. They read: 'unless the Lord was enfleshed mind, he was wisdom enlightening a human mind. But this happens in all men. If this were the case, the advent of Christ was not the coming of God, but a human birth'; 'if the Word did not become an enfleshed mind, but wisdom in a mind, the Lord did not come down nor did he empty himself'; 'therefore he was a man; for, according to Paul, a man is a mind in the flesh' (frr. 70–2; fragments taken from Lietzmann 1904). Like Athanasius, Apollinaris is trying to distinguish between inspiration by divine wisdom (as in the prophets) and incarnation (as in Christ). But unlike Athanasius, whose method is simply to illustrate the differences (e.g. the Word is not said to suffer when a prophet suffers, in contrast to the case of Christ), Apollinaris' method is analytical: if inspiration means the Word or Wisdom illuminating a human mind, then Incarnation must be something different – the Word taking the place of the human mind, which means that he becomes a human being, because a human being is a mind in the flesh (he cites Paul). This means that the Incarnate one is as much a single being as any human being (for which Apollinaris used the fateful phrase *mia physis tou Theou Logou sesarkōmenē*: one incarnate nature of God the Word): the Word is living a human life.

But what kind of a human life, without a human mind? To understand Apollinaris here, we need to be sensitive to the way he juggles the two ontological divides we have already mentioned: the Platonic divide between the spiritual and the material, and the Christian divide between uncreated and created. For Apollinaris seems to share Athanasius' analysis of creation as well as his approach to Christology: the creature, left to itself, slides away into nothingness. Hence the Fall: the frail human mind drifted off into sin, and became subject to the opportunities for sin provided by the flesh. No human mind could reverse that, for it too would be frail and succumb to the flesh. What was needed then was an uncreated mind, that is the *Logos* himself, who is unchangeable, and could assume flesh and overpower it, and thus restore fallen humankind. The Platonism is revealed in Apollinaris' anthropology: the human is simply a conjunction of spiritual mind (which can be either created or the uncreated *Logos*) and material body; but this has been radicalised by his understanding of the creature as essentially changeable and frail. There are then two motives in Apollinaris' Athanasian reflections on Christology. First, incarnation is distinct from inspiration: incarnation produces a new nature, God become man. Second, his profound sense of human frailty, including the frailty of the human mind. These two motives are manifest in Apollinaris' switching between a dichotomous and a trichotomous anthropology (in which he is not at all unusual): when he is thinking of the single nature of Christ, he tends to use a dichotomous anthropology, with the *Logos* assuming flesh; when he is thinking of human moral frailty, he employs the trichotomous model with the *Logos* taking the place of the *nous* and being joined to the soul (*psychē*, representing animal life) and body.

The Cappadocian response

Apollinaris' doctrine is neat, but what is the human life that the *Logos* has assumed in Christ? It was on that point that the two Gregories, especially Gregory Nazianzen, concentrated their attack on Apollinaris. (They attacked him, less fairly, for other beliefs that are misunderstandings of Apollinaris, either by them or by Apollinaris' disciples, for instance the belief that the Word brought his humanity from heaven and did not assume it from the Virgin.) For them both, Apollinaris' Christology was radically deficient because Christ had to assume all human life if he was to redeem it. But the part of man most in need of redemption was precisely the human mind and will, for humans had fallen, according to the biblical narrative, not because they succumbed to the flesh, but because they

rebelled against God, or crossed wills with him: the fundamental sin that had brought about the Fall was pride, setting oneself up in defiance of God. As Gregory Nazianzen memorably put it: 'For the unassumed is the unhealed; that which is united to God is saved' (*ep*. 101.32). But as the second part of that sentence (often forgotten) reveals, Gregory remained committed to the Athanasian approach to Christology: the Word assumes everything human to live a human life, and thereby to redeem and indeed to deify humankind. Elsewhere in the letters devoted to the Apollinarian heresy (*epp*. 101, 102, 201), and also in his sermons, especially the third 'Theological Oration' (*or*. 29.17–21), Gregory tackles the problem of how the Word, fully divine in himself, can assume humanity, lacking in nothing. Two principles emerge. First, there is one subject in Christ, and that subject is the *Logos*, everything done by Christ or suffered by him is to be ascribed to the *Logos*; second, this produces a paradoxical union of God and humanity, and to enter into that paradox is to begin to realise the meaning of the Incarnation:

> As a lamb he is dumb; but he is word, proclaimed by a voice crying in the desert. He is frail, wounded; but he heals every sickness, and every frailty. He is brought to the cross, and crucified; but he restores us by the tree of life.
>
> (or. *29.20)*

(It is worth noting that, here, as with Athanasius in *Inc*., there is no 'Incarnational' theology that prescinds from the cross: the Incarnation entails *kenōsis*, as understood by Paul in Phil. 2:5–11.)

The Christological controversy

The Antiochene school

Apollinarianism marked the beginning of the Christological controversy sparked off by the ascription of uncompromising divinity to Christ by Nicene orthodoxy. The next stage was sparked off by the reaction to Apollinaris, less measured than that of the Cappadocian Fathers, by a group of Christian thinkers associated with the metropolis of the diocese of the east (*Oriens*), Antioch. The central figure, about whom, alas, we know less than we would like, was Diodore (d. *c*. 390), who had a kind of Christian school in Antioch, where he instructed his pupils in both scriptural exegesis and theology, and the principles and practice of Christian asceticism. He later became bishop of Tarsus. Among his pupils in Antioch were numbered Theodore, who later became bishop of Mopsuestia (d. 428), and probably John Chrysostom, who later, fatefully, became archbishop of Constantinople (d. 407). Later representatives of this group of Christian thinkers include Nestorius (d. *c*. 451), later archbishop of Constantinople, who was probably a pupil of Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Theodoret (*c*. 390–*c*. 460), a later product of the ascetical schools in Antioch, who became bishop of Cyrrhus, and, as well as a theologian and church historian, was a historian of Syrian asceticism.

Characteristics of the Antiochenes

This group is marked by a number of features. First, there is the commitment to Christian asceticism, which, however, did not lead them to a withdrawn form of monasticism (at least, not permanently), but rather led them to pastoral (and eventually episcopal) activity, through which they pressed the demands of asceticism on ordinary Christians. Second, in apparent contrast to the ascetic commitment, there is their attention to, and skill in, rhetorical ability: both John and Theodore were pupils of the great pagan rhetor, Libanius; John and Nestorius were summoned to the episcopal throne of Constantinople because of their fame as preachers; Diodore attracted the attention of the emperor Julian for the rhetorical skill with which he attacked the ancient gods.[18] Third, and representing the convergence of their ascetical commitment and their rhetorical training, there is their distinctive

approach to scriptural interpretation, marked by concern to establish the literal meaning of the text, and to draw from it a predominantly moral and ascetical message (cf. Young 1997). John Chrysostom engaged in such biblical exegesis almost entirely through sermons; Theodore and Theodoret produced continuous commentaries and treatises (*zētēmata*) discussing difficult passages in biblical books; Theodore's skill was such that he was known as 'the Interpreter'. All of them, however, suffered condemnation for crossing the archbishops of Alexandria, Theophilus and his nephew and successor Cyril. John, whose offence was primarily political, was rapidly reinstated; but Nestorius, Theodore and Theodoret were condemned at ecumenical synods – Nestorius at Ephesus (431) and Theodore and Theodoret at Constantinople II (553) – with the result that their works have survived in a fragmentary form, preserved by churches that did not acknowledge the authority of these councils. The works of Diodore, who was linked with Theodore by Cyril as precursors of Nestorius, have suffered the same fate.

Because of the imperfect transmission of their works, there are serious gaps in our understanding of their theology. The abundant (indeed over-abundant) survival of Chrysostom's works do little to fill this lacuna, as Chrysostom seems untypical in his approach to Christology, which provided the grounds for the condemnation of his fellow-Antiochenes. It is perhaps the case (though the lack of evidence makes it difficult to be certain) that Christology, as it was understood by the Cappadocians and Cyril, was not in fact at the centre of Antiochene theology.

Christology and exegesis

The Antiochene approach to the nature of Christ seems to have been directly influenced by their approach to scriptural exegesis. An important question posed by their exegetical approach concerned identifying the person – as in 'dramatis personæ' – or character (*prosōpon*) speaking or acting in the text. This led to their distinguishing between the 'person' of the man and the 'person' of the Word in the Gospel narratives: the person of the man performed all the human-befitting actions of Christ – being born, eating, walking, being tired, suffering pain, anguish and death – and the person of the Word performed those actions characteristic of the Godhead – miracles, supernatural insight into people and circumstances. Their exegesis, therefore, led them directly to embrace the second tendency in post-Nicene Christology mentioned earlier, the tendency to keep the Godhead and manhood apart, to keep them in their distinctness and integrity (the so-called Word-man Christology). This was enhanced by the moral thrust of their exegesis and indeed the moral dimension of their whole understanding of the cosmological role of humanity. Christ's humanity is appreciated for its function in providing an example of morally perfect humanity: this moral emphasis demands the full integrity of his humanity.

Theodore of Mopsuestia

To see this in more detail, it will be helpful to look more closely at the one who was perhaps the most penetrating theologian among the Antiochenes, Theodore of Mopsuestia.[19] Central to Theodore's theology is his doctrine of the Two Ages: the present age and the age to come. His understanding of the present age is very like Athanasius' understanding of the human fallen state: beings created out of nothing are sliding back into non-existence, and their state is characterised by corruption and death. But whereas Athanasius gives this a fundamentally ontological interpretation, Theodore's reading of this is primarily moral: corruption is the negative side of the creature's fundamentally changeable state which makes it impossible for the human creature in this present age to live a life in conformity to the will of God, which is marked by unchangeability. The age to come represents the reverse of the frailty and changeability of the present age: it is characterised by unshakable, serene conformity to the will of God. Athanasius and Theodore also differ in their understanding of how God has remedied the fallen human condition of the present age. Whereas Athanasius sees this present world

transformed by the presence of the Incarnate Word, a transformation manifest in the achievement by Christians of virginity and martyrdom and their defeat of the demons (*Inc.* 27–31, 48–55), Theodore seems to look rather to the establishment of a Christian hope that, when this present age is swept away, the age to come will be manifest. And Theodore sees that hope established in the existence within this present age of the life of the age to come in the person of Christ: in the person of Christ we see, amid the corruption and changeability of the present age, the living out of a life of perfect conformity to the will of the Father. This life was a perfect human life; it is necessary then that Christ had a complete humanity – hence the fierce opposition of the Antiochenes to any hint of Apollinarianism. It is the Resurrection that sets the seal on this life, and demonstrates that this life has destroyed the corruption and death of the present age and opened up the way to the age to come. Henceforth, Christians, believing in Christ, while they still live in this present age marked by corruption and death, 'receive in hope communion with him and this life to come'.[20]

The Christological question for Theodore is simply: how was it possible for Christ to live in this present age the life of the age to come? And his answer is that the Word dwelt in the man Jesus so completely that he was able to resist the corrupting influence of the present age. But it was an indwelling by grace, even though more complete (both in intensity and duration: from his very conception) than with other human beings. Theodore spoke of an indwelling 'by [God's] good pleasure' (*kat' eudokian*), 'as in a son' (*hōs en huiō[i]*). As a result of the Word's exceptional indwelling in Christ, there appeared to be two 'persons' (*prosōpa*), as in the Gospel accounts, but also, as the Gospel account makes clear, these two *prosōpa* were in complete harmony – the grace of the Word was present in the actions of the humanity – so that one could speak of one *prosōpon*, the *prosōpon* of the union, as his disciple Nestorius will call it. But this one *prosōpon* is a result of the union, not its presupposition, as with Athanasius and his followers. It is the coming together of the 'Word who assumes' and the 'humanity assumed': and that coming together is a mutual coming together, a union of two perfect subjects, divine and human.

Nestorius and the beginnings of the conflict

Theodore died in the communion of the Church, but that same year (428) Nestorius was elected archbishop of Constantinople. He arrived full of reforming zeal, promising the emperor heaven in return for an earth purged of heretics, and set about persecuting heretical Christians – Arians, Macedonians and others – though prevented by the emperor when he turned to the Novatianist congregations. But he soon found himself embroiled in charges of heresy. One of the priests he had brought with him from Antioch, Anastasius, preached against the use of the title *Theotokos* ('one who gave birth to God', Mother of God) of the Virgin Mary. Devotion to the Mother of God had grown throughout the fourth century; this is presumably not unconnected with the development during that century of the feast of the Nativity of Christ, which provided a focus in the Christian Year additional to the Resurrection, and one in which the Virgin Mary had an inalienable role as *Theotokos*. Word of Nestorius' opposition to the use of *Theotokos* came to the ear of Cyril, pope of Alexandria, who saw this as an ideal opportunity to clip the wings of the upstart see of Constantinople (granted status after Rome and before Alexandria by the synod of Constantinople in 381). For the title *Theotokos* was central to the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria.

Cyril of Alexandria: the seal of the Fathers

It is difficult to overestimate the importance for Greek theology of Cyril of Alexandria (*c.* 380–444), who by the seventh century had been dubbed the 'seal of the Fathers'. The heart of his theology is Christ: Cyril has been claimed as 'the only theologian of genius there has ever been of whom it is true to say, almost without metaphor, that his theology is "Christocentric"' (Wickham 1983: xxxiv).

It was the failure of the synod of Chalcedon in 451 to convince the east that it had not betrayed Cyril that led to schisms that still endure. Cyril's understanding of Christ is essentially that of Athanasius, shorn of the danger of Apollinarianism; Cyril always insists that the flesh that the Word became, according to John 1:14, was 'flesh ensouled with a rational soul'.[21] But the Word made flesh was, as Athanasius had understood, God living a human life, and the sole subject of the Incarnate life was the Word, something Cyril likes to demonstrate from the creed of the Nicene synod of 325. As such, the Incarnate one was a unity, a single nature: 'one incarnate nature of God the Word' (*mia physis tou Theou Logou sesarkōmenē*), to use the phrase of which he later became fond, and which he thought Athanasian, although it was, alas, from Apollinaris. Because of the unity of the Incarnate one, it was proper to acknowledge 'God's Word as having suffered in the flesh, been crucified in the flesh, tasted death in flesh and been made first-born from the dead',[22] as Cyril put it in the twelfth anathematism he insisted that Nestorius affirm, although in himself, in his own being, the Word of God is immune to suffering. It followed equally that Mary was *Theotokos* (first anathematism), and that the Gospel narrative is not to be interpreted of two subjects (fourth anathematism). Nestorius refused to accept these and other stipulations and, outflanked by Cyril's superior political acumen, was condemned at the synod of Ephesus in 431 (the third Ecumenical Synod). After the synod, Cyril came to an agreement with the bishops of the diocese of the *Oriens*, led by John of Antioch, who accepted the condemnation of Nestorius. According to this agreement, the 'Formula of Union' (Tanner 1990: 69–70), the unity of Christ was affirmed, with the entailment that Mary is indeed the Mother of God, *Theotokos*, but the natures thus united were affirmed as being perfect, one *homoousios* with the Father, the other *homoousios* with us, and it was further agreed that both ways of interpreting the Gospel narratives – that which referred the actions of Christ to a single *prosōpon*, and that which distinguished between two natures –were acceptable.

With Cyril, we find ourselves at a cusp in the development of the theology of the Greek east: in him many of the insights of his predecessors find their culminating expression, but his theological vision was of such power and profundity that it represents the beginning of a further stage in the formation of the theological tradition of the Byzantine east.

Notes

1 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestæ* 15.7.7; 21.16.18: Hamilton 1986: 80, 232.
2 On Arius and the controversy he aroused, see Williams 1987.
3 Williamson 1989: xxxiii, referring to Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 10.4.
4 Arius, *Epistula ad Alexandrum Alexandrinum*, 3 (Opitz 1934: 12).
5 Eusebius of Cæsarea, *Epistula ad ecclesiam Cæsariensem* 7 (Opitz 1934: 43–4).
6 For more detail on the wake of Nicaea, see Ayres (2004), Behr (2004), Anatolios (2011).
7 See Thomson 1971. *Contra Gentes* is abbreviated as *CG*, and *de Incarnatione* as *Inc.*
8 See Anatolios (1998: 28); Behr (2004: 168–9).
9 For Basil, see Radde-Gallwitz (2012).
10 For Gregory Nazianzen, see Daley (2006) and his articles.
11 For the doctrine of God in Basil and Gregory, see Radde-Gallwitz (2009)
12 See especially John Chrysostom, *de Incomprehensibili Dei natura homiliæ* 1–5 (Malingrey 1970).
13 See Jaeger (1960).
14 See Pruche 1986. *De Spiritu Sancto* is abbreviated as *Spirit*.
15 On the early history of the Messalians, see Stewart 1991.
16 From a somewhat different perspective, see Staats 1979.
17 Srawley 1903. *Catechetical Oration* is abbreviated as *Cat*.
18 Julian, *ep*. 55 (Wright 1923: 188).
19 For this interpretation of Theodore, see Norris 1963: especially 125–262.
20 Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Homily* 6. 12 (Tonneau 1949: 153).
21 Cyril, *ep*. 2 *ad Nestorium* 3 (Wickham 1983: 4).
22 Cyril, *ep*. 3 *ad Nestorium* 12 (Wickham 1983: 33).

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31
LATER THEOLOGIANS OF THE WEST

Ivor J. Davidson

Western theology from 312–430 in context

The period between Constantine's adoption of Christianity in 312–13 and the death of Augustine in 430 was traditionally hailed as the Golden Age of Latin patristic literature. First impressions may suggest this is an exaggeration, or at least an error of chronology. If we measure the intellectual importance of the era by the number of major authors producing seminal works, we might conclude that a time of real productivity did not begin until the 350s, and it was only in the last quarter of the fourth century that the western churches developed an output in any sense comparable to its Greek counterpart (Young *et al.* 2004: pt. III). From Tertullian onwards, the articulation of a Latin apologetic had been pioneered by the erudite zealots of North Africa; one of this tradition's distant sons, the eminent court-teacher Lactantius, had been able to celebrate the dawning of the Constantinian age and the providential triumph of a faith so recently persecuted, but Lactantius was by then approaching his later years, and no western intellectual of his succeeding generation appeared to make any effort to supplement his moralizing marketing strategies with a serious exposition of the core doctrines which underpinned the Christians' message. A distinct Latin theology blessed with either depth or breadth had yet to materialize. Even when such a theology did come to birth, much of it never equalled the accomplishments of the Greek tradition in either quantity or, with the clear exception of Augustine's work, quality. Should the 'Golden Age' designation simply be abandoned?

Intellectual capital needs to be assessed by subtler mechanisms, however, than counting up texts and comparing them with contemporary trends elsewhere. The literary legacy of the period does consist supremely in the achievements of the writers concentrated in its second half, above all the galaxy of Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine, who between them made outstanding contributions to most of the branches of what we might today call biblical exegesis, dogmatics and moral theology (they themselves would have been puzzled by our distinctions between those categories), and who laid doctrinal foundations which, for good or ill, have affected western Christianity ever since. But the importance of the era is also to be traced in the major issues about which these writers thought, and those issues had in most cases been germinating over some considerable time. The later west's story does not begin at mid-century, but in a process of intellectual evolution set in motion by the so-called Constantinian revolution itself.

To appreciate that process, we need to grasp the impact of the changes in the social environment within which western Christians had already started to operate by the teens, twenties and thirties of the fourth century. Over a relatively short period, believers had gone from being targets for

persecution to beneficiaries of imperial patronage; clergy had become favoured with the kind of fiscal privileges and exemptions from curial service traditionally reserved for pagan priests and other select groups. The outworking of that change of status over the ensuing generations never was half so smooth as the assured accounts of some of the chroniclers of Christianity have implied. There was no wholesale cultural metamorphosis. The ongoing tensions between 'paganism' and the churches can be discerned not just at the obvious flash-points, such as the short-lived attempt by Julian to reinstate some of the symbolism of the old order in the early 360s, but in a host of less conspicuous yet none the less revealing social and political developments as well. The Christianizing of the empire was plagued by the considerable theological differences that existed within the Christian communities themselves; by the shifting calculations of their political patrons; and by the ability of non-Christian power groups to play upon the fragilities of imperial alignments with particular doctrinal causes in the interests of their own strategies. The status of Christianity as an official religion brought its own problems, not least over what to do when schisms erupted in local contexts and rival claims were adduced for imperial favours. Despite a series of anti-pagan measures by Constantius II in the 350s, the religions of the classical world remained officially tolerated for most of the century, only being declared obsolete *superstitiones* in the later years of Theodosius' reign (375–95), when the label *pagani* at last symbolized a definitive second-class status for those who remained loyal to the traditions of polytheism.

Despite all the caveats, however, the developments of the later century were organically linked to a process which began under Constantine. Long before the 350s, urban Christian communities were growing used to state largesse. They could express their new-found prestige and wealth by erecting elaborate church complexes and playing upon their civil privileges. Bishops positioned themselves as a new class of imperial leaders, vital to the judicial and financial affairs of their regions, the overseers of clerical hierarchies charged not only with the cure of souls but with the promotion of a certain social order. Church officials could no longer simply be dismissed as zealous *parvenus*: in Italy at least, the church's figureheads came from increasingly privileged backgrounds and were educated to the highest standards; it was easy for them to see themselves as custodians of a new elite. Constantine himself may never have anticipated the longer-term implications of the vast paradigm-shift for which he was responsible, and whether he is regarded in the light of them as hero, villain or something in between is, in one sense, almost beside the point. What mattered was that the social world in which western Christianity existed had been launched on a course of profound change from 312–13 onwards. Inevitably, the intellectual contours of the faith were being altered along with it.

As external pressures on the Christian communities had eased, so the quest to attain theological and structural unity internally had intensified. The ideal of a unified empire was to be facilitated and reinforced by the ideal of a unified Catholic church, notionally embracing all those everywhere who were subject to the rule of faith. The impetus towards ecumenical oneness was of course most visible in the church's grand new imperial councils and the creeds they generated. It is no accident that the critical phase in the west's development loosely parallels the period between the Council of Nicaea in 325 and the Council of Chalcedon in 451, and the politically driven aspiration to fashion benchmark statements to differentiate the normative from the unacceptable at a confessional level, so defining the boundaries of the imperial church. Latin-speaking Christianity may for a generation after Nicaea have lacked the doctrinal acuity to rival the achievements of its eastern neighbour, but it already shared implicitly in the same socio-cultural assurance and recognized the value of articulating its gospel in the same kinds of political terms. Latin culture had always been indebted to the Hellenistic world, and it was entirely natural that the florescence of Greek theology represented by Athanasius, the Cappadocians and the great exegetes of Alexandria and Antioch (who, it might be noted in passing, were far less neatly differentiable in their reading habits than was once supposed) would influence later western thinking, evoking a plethora of Latin translations of Greek texts and a steady assimilation of eastern ideas into vernacular preaching. But even before these direct connections came to be so prominent, western clergy could appreciate that the future of their mission was closely

bound to the imperial dream and to the defence of a notional common tradition. The church's own understandings of ecumenicity were driven, even subsumed, by the exigencies of a cultural ideal.

Yet the fourth- and early fifth-century west was in fact anything but an obvious time for calm reflection. On the political stage, the age which began with the promotion of Christianity to privileged status ended with the crumbling of the military boundaries which had served to delimit the territory of truth, and the realization that the idea of a common destiny for east and west was and always had been a chimera. At both ends of the time-line, the consequences for the church were considerable: without the Constantinian revolution, Donatism would never have become the force it was; without the fall of Rome, the beliefs of Pelagius and his followers would never have assumed the significance they did. On the theological stage, the western church was riven by a whole series of doctrinal problems throughout our period, not just the *causes célèbres* like 'Arianism', or the tensions evoked by conflicting visions of an ascetic ideal (seen most notably, perhaps, in the controversies surrounding Priscillian of Avila in the 370s and 380s (Chadwick 1976; Burrus 1995; Conti 2009)), but the much wider-reaching intellectual challenges posed by the popularity of systems such as Manichaeism (Lieu 1992, 2014), or the powerful appeal of Platonism for the intelligentsia in particular (Gerson 2010). For all the punching-power of Rome and its bishops, and for all the theological rhetoric, diversity not unity characterized the west: the dream of straightforward doctrinal unification was elusive.

In the eastern empire, the centralization of political authority in Constantinople produced a steady imperial control of ecclesiastical affairs; in the west, the papacy secured a position of greater influence, yet in theological terms its significance for much of this period was heavily symbolic: popes like Damasus (366–84) and Siricius (384–99) proudly epitomized and promoted independent western traditions, liturgical, ascetic and moral, but their actual control over ecclesiastical events beyond their immediate context was often limited. One of the most striking features of the Golden Age is the extent to which the formulation of Latin Christianity was affected by the considerably different visions of the church and its salvation that prevailed in North Africa, Italy and Gaul. The ultimate triumph of what we think of as western 'orthodoxy' was a highly messy process, deeply affected by the ebb and flow of political and military developments and the ability of competing ecclesiastical power-brokers to muster support for their particular doctrinal shibboleths. The story of it all is perforce written by the victors, whose vision of a realized Catholicity and consensus inevitably manages to smooth away the bumps in the prehistory of their theme; it is important to recognize that the success of the protagonists was not achieved by a series of easy strokes, or by the naked power of argument alone. Nevertheless, the very problems which beset the quest for oneness evoked serious intellectual endeavour in themselves: fewer wrangles, fewer theological milestones.

The complexities of the later imperial world have been remarkably opened up to us in modern times. Historical scholarship has learned to deploy not only the traditional tools of literary and archaeological research but models of enquiry deriving from the social sciences to uncover more and more of the milieux in which the Christians of late western antiquity lived, worked and witnessed (for an overview, see Bowersock *et al.* 1999; and especially Harvey and Hunter 2008; Casiday and Norris 2014). We now appreciate that the ostensibly monolithic structures of church and empire were far more stratified than previous generations tended to imagine, and that the relationship of churchmen to the machinery of state patronage was a delicate and precarious business. However privileged the upper echelons of the ecclesiastical hierarchy may have become, they had to struggle to define the identity of their communities over against the prestige represented by the older traditions of their social contexts. It was all too easy to get the balance wrong between milking the rich opportunities afforded by political beneficence and falling prey to the vested interests of secular authorities. Christian leaders were caught between the competing imperatives of an ideal of otherworldliness and the incentives to extend and sustain their churches' profile in a system that offered rich rewards for services rendered to the cause of socio-political cohesion. In the process, they

learned to exploit local pride and prejudices in order to develop power-bases of their own, each in its own way self-contained and self-assured, for all the professions of conciliarity and the ostensible ties of spiritual *amicitia* that bound it to other sees. Within certain parameters of loyalty and deference to metropolitan authority, each bishop could cultivate his own particular manifestation of the *ecclesia Catholica*, defined by his abilities to present himself as the benefactor, counsellor and figurehead of his community. These provincial fiefdoms were especially important in the west, where in the wake of Rome's collapse in the fifth century they would contribute to the emergence of a new world order in which regional societies could aspire to their own kind of pragmatic stability independent of an overarching military and fiscal system.

Here, then, is the world of the late west – a scene remarkably different for Christianity from any which had preceded it, yet one that was much more complex and ambivalent than we might once have supposed. An understanding of this socio-cultural context is vital to our evaluation of the intellectual heritage bequeathed by the churches' great thinkers. Like so much Christian thought before and since, most of the ideas with which we deal in this period took shape in the white heat of controversy, and amidst personal, political and ecclesiastical alliances that were often characterized by significant tension and distrust. But it was in the convergence of these specific factors that they assumed the form they did, and without the contingencies of personalities and politics, the legacy of this 'Golden Age' would have no overall meaning.

The Donatists

The Donatist controversy, so-called after the election of Donatus as rival bishop to Caecilian of Carthage in 313, was the most famous issue of ecclesiastical discipline in the early church, and it led to an attempt to grapple with questions of Christian identity at a much more complex level than ever before in the west (Frend 1985; Tilley 1997; Shaw 2011). Since Chapter 44 of this volume is devoted to Donatism, in this section I shall offer only a general outline.

The roots of the controversy lay in the rigourist views of salvation which had emerged in Roman North Africa from the second century. There the true church had come to be perceived as an essentially separatist movement, the community of God's elect, pure and holy, constituted by baptism as a Spirit-led people. This puritanism had been intensified in the Decian persecution, when the revered martyr-bishop Cyprian of Carthage had insisted (in *De lapsis* in 251 CE) that baptism could be administered only by clerics who belonged to the faithful, confessing church; bishops who had compromised in times of trouble could not offer effective prayers of baptism or ordination, for they had forfeited their possession of the gift of the Spirit, and Christians who had lapsed from the faith required to be baptized afresh if they were to be re-admitted to the Catholic community. The idea had been fostered that the real church was always under threat from a spurious imitator, whose officials and ceremonies had no divine sanction.

The Numidian clergy in particular, from the rural areas of modern-day eastern Algeria, were heirs to this tradition. They saw themselves as the upholders of a Christianity that remained qualitatively distinct. They refused to countenance the validity of Caecilian's election as bishop in 311 because one of his consecrators, Felix of Aptungi, was rumoured (unfairly, as it turned out) to have been a *traditor*, or one who had 'handed over' his Scriptures to be burned during the Great Persecution under Diocletian in 303–5. They elected an alternative candidate, one Majorinus, in his place; he in turn was shortly succeeded by Donatus. Caecilian held out against his challengers, arguing that many of the Numidians themselves had been collaborators, and that the Catholic church, particularly in the light of Constantine's conversion, naturally embraced a wide range of sinners in its ranks.

According to the standard disputes procedures of empire, Donatus' party appealed to the emperor. To Constantine, the affair seemed like a distant, parochial quarrel over personalities; guided, evidently, by Miltiades, bishop of Rome, he took Caecilian's part from the outset. An imperial commission in 313 decided against Donatus, and an ecclesiastical council at Arles in 314 exonerated Felix of the

charge of having been a *traditor*. Caecilian was formally endorsed as rightful bishop of Carthage in November 316. Initially, the Donatists had argued that they were contending simply for the purity of the church and the exclusivity of its sacraments, but they soon formed into a separate group which, they insisted, now represented the true *populus Dei* in North Africa.

The Donatist movement spread rapidly, fuelled by Donatus' charismatic personality and by the plausibility of his supporters' claims to represent many of the genuine moral and spiritual traditions of the North African church. Much of the history has been filtered through the polemic of the Donatists' fiercest enemies, and it is necessary to do a fair bit of critical work to piece together the realities. Despite what some have argued, it is clear that Donatism was not a protest movement of a political or nationalist kind, neither should it be characterized as an indigenous regional force at odds with an urban, romanized Catholicism (*pace* Frend 1985). Associations with the so-called *circumcelliones* (militant ascetics who based themselves around martyrs' *cellae* or shrines but also roamed across the region) from the 340s (Shaw 2004; Pottier 2008) intensified a claim on the part of some of the movement's insiders, and certainly many of its foes, that the violent subversion of social structures was part of the agenda. Donatist theology did make a strong appeal to North Africa's martyr traditions, and the line between death as a consequence of unavoidable persecution and death as the goal of zealous commitment could certainly be blurred (Tilley 1996). But for all their spiritual energy, the Donatists were not primarily social revolutionaries. Seeing themselves as God's elect, they sought to anchor their self-image in biblical teaching and local ascetic ideals, adapting their practical interpretations of both as their social circumstances evolved (Tilley 1997).

Though actively repressed by the imperial powers at various stages in the fourth century, the Donatist movement achieved a massive dominance of its territory. Archaeology has uncovered the physical evidence: vast basilica complexes erected in key Numidian towns such as Timgad and Bagai, which effectively became Donatist 'holy cities', and countless smaller churches all over the countryside as individual villages eagerly symbolized their devotion to the idea that they were a chosen people (Frend 1985: 48–59). By the second half of the century, these communities bid fair to be the established church of their region. Relations with the believers they challenged were often highly tense, and there was significant struggle for power, some of it violent. From the 360s onwards, Donatus' successor in Carthage, Parmenian, could present a somewhat more constructive tone, and in the 370s and 380s the Donatist lay-theologian Tyconius, whose *Liber Regularum* (Babcock 1989) constituted the first Latin study on hermeneutics (even his resolute opponent, Augustine, appreciated it greatly), could concede that the true church included good and bad elements. Nevertheless, the claim continued to be pressed that, as far as North Africa was concerned, the separatist movement was the authentic body. Over against this, the Catholic Optatus of Milevis argued that Parmenian and his followers were schismatics precisely because they were not heretical in their doctrine, but insisted on condemning everyone else. Yet when it came to staking a claim to represent the real traditions of the North African faith, in various respects it was Optatus, not Parmenian, who appeared on the back foot.

When Augustine became bishop of Hippo in 395, he inherited a community deeply divided between a very powerful Donatist party and a resentful Catholic one. Augustine preached vigorously against the Donatists' claims, took steps to raise the moral tone of his own clergy so as to limit criticisms of their discipline, and laboured to assemble a fuller account of the dispute as it had evolved historically. In a series of treatises and epistles addressed to Donatist leaders, he attacked their logic head-on, and the debate with Donatism came to be pitched much more seriously in exegetical and intellectual terms. But it was imperial legislation that took things to another level. If the Donatist movement was in fact heretical in its claims, not merely an alternative way of understanding things, it could be argued that it warranted more vigorous suppression still. A series of civil laws was passed; finally, in May of 411, Augustine succeeded in forcing his opponents into an open conference at Carthage, presided over by an imperial representative. Donatism was roundly condemned, and in 412 was formally outlawed by imperial edict; its clergy were exiled, their property

confiscated. Even so, it did not die fast: though seriously weakened, it perhaps persisted in one form or another into the eighth century. By then, however, the rival communities of North Africa had for the most part long since coalesced.

The story of Donatism's course can be followed up elsewhere (see Chapter 44). It is easy to sense how powerful its appeal would have been to people nurtured on separatist ideals of one kind or another. It is equally beguiling to trace possible later parallels in the European Reformation or in British and North American Nonconformism. But the movement's lasting significance lies not so much in the compound of cultural concerns by which it was fed as in the theological arguments it engendered. Donatism produced the first serious efforts in the west to address the complex relationships between the nature of the church, Catholicity, baptism and the validity of clerical office.

What was the true church? Was it, as the Donatists believed, an absolutely pure body; or was it, as Augustine argued, an inevitable mixture, not just sociologically but morally as well? The Donatist appeal to Cyprian's stern line on apostasy could be matched by invocation of another element of Cyprian's teaching – that repentance by a schismatic restores to grace. To Augustine, Jesus' parables implied that the church included the wheat and the tares, the good fish and the bad; only God had the ability finally to separate them. Human attempts to differentiate led only to schism, a far worse sin than the *traditio* so abhorred by the Donatists. The church could be co-extensive with its social world, both for good (as in the emerging unity of empire or missionary expansion) and for ill (as in the risk of moral and doctrinal corruption). The mystery of Catholicity, Augustine argued, was located within this tensile reality. The holiness of the church consisted not in its members but in the holiness of the Christ whose body it is.

Again: what made baptism valid? Was it the spiritual condition of the officiating cleric, or was it the command of Christ? Wherein lay the authority of ordination? Was it in the moral spotlessness of the priest, or in the divine commission to ordain? The Donatists contended that baptism had to be performed by a 'pure' representative of a 'perfect' church; Augustine insisted that the validity of a sacrament rested not upon the merits of the individual who administered it but upon the merits of the Christ who instituted it in the first place. His logic abandoned the austere side of Cyprian's reasoning. It was an explicit affirmation of what would later be called an *ex opere operato* understanding of sacramental efficacy, which became the consensus western position.

Augustine's defence of the legitimacy of exploiting state authority to coerce his Donatist opponents into submission lent a theological weight to later campaigns to persecute minority voices within the church, and appeal would certainly be made to his example by some of European church history's darker tacticians (Shaw 2011; see also Gaddis 2005: 131–50). Primarily, however, Donatism had served as a catalyst for the discussion of ecclesiological and sacramental themes. It raised issues which have remained central to western debates in these areas ever since.

Arianism

The theological controversy that dominated the fourth century was Arianism. Modern scholarship has alerted us to the reality that 'Arianism' as we have traditionally spoken of it is a rhetorical construct; there is good reason to rethink conventional ways of categorizing the wide array of so-called 'Arian' theologies which arose in the course of the fourth century after Nicaea (Barnes and Williams 1993; Williams 2001; Ayres 2004; and Chapter 45 of this volume). Arius' own theology was quite different from many of these. Nicaea's *homoousios*, the insistence that the being of the Son does not belong within the ranks of creatures, but is (in later strict construal of the term) 'of the same substance' with the Father, was initially highly ambiguous; it did not become the watchword of a clearly 'pro-Nicene' position in the east until a generation after its original adoption. The theological issues at stake in these debates were and are of immense significance for Christian theology, but the idea of a monolithic 'Arianism' opposed by an equally homogeneous orthodoxy only originates in the middle of the fourth century (Lienhard 1999; Parvis 2006; Gwynn 2007).

The enduring myth that the disputes over Nicaea were primarily an eastern affair, without the same impact in the Latin-speaking west, also testifies to the skill with which the opponents of 'Arian' theologies managed to control the course of subsequent historiography (Ferguson 2005). Athanasius' periods of exile did enable him to amass considerable support in the west, but the alliances on all sides were fluid and pragmatic, reflective of more than neat or clear doctrinal convictions. Emergent Nicene theology enjoyed formal western support at the Council of Serdica in 343. Western Nicenes enjoyed the protection of Constans until 350. But the sole rulership of Constantius II in the 350s brought renewed patronage for alternatives to the homoousian position, and a reversal of official western assessments of Athanasius; a number of pro-Nicene western bishops were removed from their sees. The upshot was the creed of Sirmium in 357, a version of which was endorsed, after imperial pressure, by a majority of westerners at Ariminum (Rimini) in 359 (as it was at Seleucia in the east): in Jerome's famous words, 'The whole world groaned and marvelled to find itself Arian' (*Dialogue against the Luciferians* 19). The west had signed up to a 'homoian' doctrine, that God the Son is *like* (*homoios*) God the Father, but subordinate, not consubstantial. Exiled bishops were permitted to return to their sees during the renaissance of paganism under Julian, as part of a bid to play off Nicene and Arian against each other in order to weaken Christianity *en bloc*. Life continued to be easier for western Nicenes under Valentinian I, who (unlike his brother Valens, who deliberately promoted other interests in the east) aspired to remain free from open doctrinal affiliations; nevertheless, homoian clergy remained dominant in significant sees. The young Gratian was manoeuvred into a Nicene position in the end, though not before some vacillation. His co-regent and successor, the boy-emperor Valentinian II, heavily encouraged by his mother Justina, Valentinian I's widow, actively advanced the homoians' cause. A definitive political end to homoian prospects in the imperial west was not achieved until Theodosius, and even then it was partly bound up with the political uncertainty of the times and the ability of pro-Nicene leaders, above all (as I set out in Chapter 57) Ambrose of Milan, to force their opponents' hand and to blend doctrinal arguments with appeals to baser prejudice: the homoians shared the form of Christianity adopted by the Gothic invaders who had begun to destabilize the empire itself.

In reality, principled non-Nicene theology constituted a mainstream position within western imperial Christianity for much of the fourth century, and it persisted long after that as the faith of people-groups who identified as different from the Romans. Pro-Nicene theology was nevertheless advanced in the second half of the century by a number of remarkable figures, and their activities contributed substantially to the evolution of theology in Latin. Two in particular stand out.

Hilary of Poitiers

The first is Hilary (*c.* 315–67/8), bishop of Poitiers from around 350, classically labelled 'the Athanasius of the West'. We know almost nothing about Hilary's early life, but he was clearly given a good classical education prior to embarking on his ecclesiastical career (Galtier 1960; Daniélou *et al.* 1968; Labande 1969). As bishop, he found himself exiled by Constantius in 356. The reasons are not entirely clear: it may be that he had refused to acquiesce in the condemnation of Athanasius and the Nicene cause (Borchardt 1966: 24–37; Doignon 1971: 455–513; Barnes 1992); it may be there were other political factors (Brennecke 1984: 210–43; Williams 1991). At any rate, he spent four years in Phrygia, where he came into contact with eastern theology first-hand, and expanded his understanding of the kinds of strategies adopted by anti-Arians in the east. He developed some sympathies for the homoiousian ('similar-substance') approach, which he felt could, if understood correctly, be an appropriate way of addressing the core issues in dispute. Homoiousian theology appeared to avoid the dangers of modalism implicit in claims to literal identity of divine substance on the one hand while disowning the idea of dissimilarity of substance advocated by harder-line anti-Nicenes on the other. Hilary participated in the Council of Seleucia in 359 among the ranks of the homoiousians. On his return to Gaul in 360, he embarked on an energetic campaign to persuade western clergy that

homoian theology, which remained widely favoured, was in error. In a series of synods, he persuaded his fellow-bishops in Gaul to renounce the creed of Rimini as 'blasphemy'. He then, more boldly, turned his attentions to Italy itself, and attempted unsuccessfully to unseat from Milan the homoian Auxentius, occupant of the see since 355 (Williams 1992).

Hilary engaged in scholarly activity throughout his career and produced a number of important works. His *De synodis*, written in exile in 359, is an attempt to explain eastern theologies to the west in a way that would encourage western Nicenes to identify more closely with the homoiousians in the east. A number of other works provide valuable information on the doctrinal history of the period and fill in some of the details of Hilary's opposition to homoians such as Saturninus of Arles and Auxentius in Milan. Hilary completed important, spiritually focused commentaries on Matthew's gospel (the first Latin commentary on the text to survive in original form) and on some of the Psalms, read as heavily prefigurative of Christ; his Old Testament exegesis there and elsewhere owes much to Origen. He is also significant in being the first definitive writer of hymns in Latin, though only three of these survive (incomplete at that). They reflect a range of classical influences. Like Ambrose after him, Hilary was conscious of the value of hymns as popular media of theological instruction.

Hilary's most significant theological work, composed largely in exile, is the text known to us as *De Trinitate*, in twelve books. In its final form a composite text, its structure is a matter of continuing scholarly debate (Beckwith 2008). It constitutes not so much a full-scale Trinitarian theology (typically for the period, little is said on the Spirit) as an elaborate defence of the status of the Son. Reflecting his homoiousian sympathies, Hilary is anxious to insist upon the Son's participation in the Godhead, but also to avoid a blurring of the distinction between the Father and the Son; his concern is that the *homoousios* label as used by some pro-Nicenes may run the latter risk. The equality of Father and Son is to be thought of in terms of a *unitas substantiae*, a unity of substance, not a *unio personae*, an identity of personhood.

In his attempt to account for the divinity of Christ while rejecting the logic that Christ's human weaknesses rendered him inferior to God, Hilary develops a Christology which is quite docetic. He posits a three-stage process of incarnation and glorification, speaking respectively of the Son's pre-existence, his humiliation and his elevation of human nature in his resurrection and ascension. But though the incarnation is said to have involved the Son's actual renunciation of the form of God in his assumption of servant form, his human body was nevertheless celestial. As naturally constituted, the human nature of Christ was free from normal human needs; amazing feats like walking on water were not, strictly speaking, miraculous for him at all, for he was simply exercising his divine prerogatives. His passion and death were real, but only because the divine Word, incapable of suffering in his divine self, condescended to allow his human nature to experience these things. Hilary aspires to a strong account of a unipersonality in Christ, but in the end the humanity is overwhelmed by the divinity. Hilary's Christology is innovative, but not without its problems (Weedman 2008).

Hilary's method is heavily grounded in the exegesis of biblical texts, and he is adamant that the only valid epistemology for theological work lies in scriptural revelation; he sees extra-textual tradition, like philosophy, as inherently subordinate. His debts to Tertullian are substantial. His style is frequently quite difficult, obscured both by the force of his rhetoric and by his polemical orientation. His Trinitarian theology never entirely gets off the ground, for his preoccupation with the issue of generation focuses his argument almost entirely upon the Father and the Son, and he does not move beyond an agential account of the Spirit to discuss the wider question of intra-divine relations and personhood. Yet Hilary should not be judged anachronistically. For the 350s and 360s, his work was pioneering, and whatever difficulties attach to some of his own formulations, he played a considerable part in the west's engagement with serious Christological reflection. Not without cause did a cult in his honour develop in Gaul (Van Dam 1993: 28–41, 155–61): the range of his travels and influence, and the intensity of his work as exegete and constructive thinker, meant that his relatively short episcopal career carried a disproportionately high significance.

Ambrose of Milan

The person who contributed more than anyone else to the demise of homoian interests in the west was, however, Ambrose (*c.* 339–97), bishop of Milan from 374. I offer a much fuller account of him in Chapter 57 of this volume. Born at Trier, son of the praetorian prefect of Gaul, Ambrose was given a classical education and pursued a career in the imperial civil service, becoming governor of Aemilia-Liguria, with a base in Milan. In 374, still unbaptized, he was elected successor to Auxentius, the long-serving homoian bishop of the city. After initial reluctance, he consented and was baptized and consecrated within the space of a week. Despite its unpromising start – an almost totally ill-prepared spiritual leader assuming a see dominated by homoian clergy opposed by a minority pro-Nicene party – his 22-year episcopate transformed the social standing of the Nicene faith in the west, not only in north Italy but much further afield as well ((McLynn 1994; Williams 1995; Ramsey 1997; Savon 1997; Moorhead 1999; Liebeschuetz 2011: pt. II).

Ambrose's success was hard won, and in reality he faced substantial opposition from homoian opponents for more than half his episcopate. But he possessed a powerful combination of intellectual, social and political skills. A fluent reader of Greek, he was able to familiarize himself with eastern theological ideas and to articulate a pro-Nicene theology with great effect from his pulpit. An experienced senior administrator, he knew how to organize people and resources. Above all, he understood how to maximize his opportunities. Though he inherited a large see still overshadowed by its powerful Roman neighbour, when the western imperial court was moved to Milan in 381 he gained access to the ear of emperors in a way that no western bishop before him had done. A consummate operator, he exploited this advantage to the full. He created a church worthy of a capital city, developing an ecclesial identity which would be acknowledged by Milan's social sophisticates and which would serve in turn as a model for other churches in north Italy and beyond.

Ambrose laboured to sustain an impression of awesome ecclesiastical authority: any attempt by Caesar to usurp what was God's was to be firmly and publicly opposed. He could see to it that a significant pagan symbol like the Altar of Victory was not restored to the Roman Senate-house (384); that homoian attempts to have basilicas sequestrated in the name of the emperor were refused, even in the face of military pressure (385–6); that legal penalties imposed upon a bishop who had orchestrated the destruction of a synagogue were lifted (388); and that Theodosius himself would do public penance for allowing a massacre of innocent citizens at Thessalonica (390). Through it all, there was a considerable measure of theatre in what Ambrose was seen to be and do, and his own position was often far less secure than the spectacle suggested; but he succeeded thanks to his ability to manage even unpromising circumstances to good effect.

The outlines of Ambrose's activity are sketched elsewhere in this volume (Chapter 57); here we note only the intellectual gifts with which he achieved his ends. First and foremost were his skills as scholar and preacher. His devotion to study made a deep impression on his contemporaries, and its fruits were no less obvious. One of the greatest orators of the early church, Ambrose learned to charm hearers as discriminating as Augustine with the learning and intensity of his style (Nauroy 1985; Oberhelman 1991: 21–61). He could rapidly assimilate the exegetical techniques of Philo and Origen, and imbibe the ideas of Athanasius, Basil and Didymus (Lucchesi 1977; Savon 1977; Pasini 1990). Some of Milan's intellectuals were keen on Platonist texts: Ambrose could evoke Plotinus, Porphyry and other writers in his homilies (Courcelle 1968: 93–138). In cultural terms, Ambrose's greatest importance lies in his mediation of Greek thought to his Latin context. More than any writer before him, he was able to popularize the idioms of eastern Nicene thinking in the vernacular of the west. Not the least of his channels for doing so lay in song: he introduced to Milan the Greek practice of congregational singing, composing simple yet evocative hymns to celebrate a fully consubstantial Christ and a truly divine Spirit. The form of the 'Ambrosian hymn', iambic dimeters arranged in quatrains to be sung antiphonally, caught on with remarkable success and proved a seminal force in the development of the western liturgy (Fontaine 1992; Dunkle 2016).

Ambrose's surviving exegesis (Pizzolato 1978) is concentrated particularly on the Old Testament, though he also produced an exposition of Luke's gospel (Graumann 1994). His chief foci are the narratives of creation and fall in Genesis (his *Hexaemeron* draws extensively on Basil's work of the same name), the lives of the patriarchs, the Psalms (Maur 1977), and the characters of Job and David. A number of treatises are ostensibly on other Old Testament exemplars such as Elijah and Naboth, but are in fact largely moral diatribes against evils such as avarice and usury (Colish 2005). An important group of texts is devoted to ascetic subjects – the promotion of virginity and the commendation of chaste widowhood as superior to the married state. Ambrose contributed a great deal to the development of female asceticism in the west (Brown 1988: 341–65). He preached funeral sermons for the emperors Valentinian II and Theodosius; we also have two homilies on the death of his brother Satyrus, who died at an early age in 378 (Biermann 1995), and both a stenographic record and a redacted version of catechetical addresses to initiates (*De sacramentis* and *De mysteriis*), which sketch a striking theology of the holy privileges into which the mystery of the sacraments conducts the humble believer (Satterlee 2002). A collection of 91 letters, arranged, on the Plinian model, into ten books (nine 'private', one 'public'), is deliberately shaped to show the bishop in the best possible light (Zelzer 1989).

His most important dogmatic works are books on the Nicene faith (*De fide*), and a sequel text on the Holy Spirit. His debts to the literary and philosophical traditions of the classical world can be gauged in his frequent evocation of Roman literature (Zelzer 1987; Davidson 2004). His most enduring moral treatise is his *De officiis*, a manual on clerical ethics based directly upon Cicero's classic of the same name, and thus significantly influenced by Stoicism, but intended very much as a Christian replacement for its literary archetype (Davidson 2002). Ambrose, the former governor who had worked hard to sustain his place among a social elite, was an intellectual who stood at the confluence of two cultural streams. Always he insisted upon the supremacy of biblical revelation over all secular philosophy (Madec 1974; Lenox-Conyngham 1993), yet the success of his ministry depended heavily upon his ability to represent an intriguing fusion of the traditional and the revolutionary. It was a paradigm that proved eminently suited to its social context.

Ambrose may not have been an original thinker of the order of an Origen, a Gregory of Nyssa or an Augustine. He was a genuinely creative intellectual nevertheless. His theological ideas and hermeneutical techniques were much shaped by his sources, but his interpretation and presentation of Scripture's message was not just a pastiche of other people's thought, neither did it merely represent a light retouching of classical moral philosophy. Ambrose was a biblical theologian; his sermons and other exegetical material may not seem like systematic textual exposition as moderns might understand such a thing, but his presentation reflects his deep investment in the scriptural economy of creation and redemption, and is aimed at practical ends in spiritual terms: the expression of Christian *difference* (Smith 2011). The *saeculum* was a corrupt place; the journey which began in the waters of baptism entailed a movement of conscious ascent away from false entanglements and an obedience teleologically ordered towards final fellowship with God. The expression of holiness might involve virtues that the world would recognize as admirable, particularly for a social elite, but it would also mean the representation of more radical understandings of purity and integrity, deriving from biblical, not merely conventional, anthropology. Deeply conservative as he remained at various levels, Ambrose also aspired to reshape assumptions of wealth, power and status in light of his particular narrative of salvation (Brown 2012: 120–47).

Ambrose anticipated various ideas that would be set out more comprehensively in later years in the west. He adumbrated aspects of Augustinian thinking on original sin (Homes Dudden 1935: 612–24), and on the validity of a just war (Swift 1970). His theology of the Eucharist assumed that a supernatural change takes place in the elements when the priest recites the dominical words (Johanny 1968); the metaphysical exploration of such an idea would of course come later. His advocacy of female asceticism made a great deal of the example of Mary (Neumann 1962), and his language encouraged the

development of Marian evolution in the medieval west. He also did much to encourage devotion to the martyrs. His depictions of natural law and its societal implications, fed by Stoic and biblical sources at once, would inform elements of medieval thought (Maes 1967). His musings on the dangers of private property have sometimes been taken as evidence for an inchoate patristic socialism, though in reality his concern was to denounce in general terms the abuses of a grasping drive for possession, not to set out some proto-Marxist agenda (Swift 1979).

Ambrose is perhaps at his most disappointing if we seek serious advances in the dogmatics of Christology and Trinity (Markschies 1995). His concern is to articulate a pro-Nicene theology as he finds it in his Greek models, but given the momentous debates which were taking place in his time over divine ontology or the dynamics of the incarnation, and given his clear ability to understand the language in which these ideas were being thrashed out, it is disappointing that some of his doctrinal discourse is dominated by rhetorical vituperation of his opponents and a blanket condemnation of all anti-Nicenes as equally wrong. The quality of argument in *De fide* may not deserve the assessment that it is 'beneath contempt' in theological terms (Hanson 1988: 669), but there are certainly finer efforts to be found in patristic reasoning; though *De Spiritu Sancto* is the first western treatise on its theme, it does not progress much beyond a lengthy demonstration of the Spirit's essential divinity. Ambrose sought to justify Nicene orthodoxy, as he heard it from Basil and others, in fairly elementary biblical terms. Speculative dogmatics never was his strongest suit; he was better at engineering public victories over his doctrinal enemies and their sponsors, as he did notoriously at the Council of Aquileia in 381, or in confrontation with the court of Valentinian II in 385–6.

But if Ambrose could not always out-argue his opponents, he could generally outclass them, and as a public communicator of his particular way of reading the Bible's moral message for an imperial capital, he was a master. His effectiveness was undoubtedly born of a deep spiritual sincerity, and there is no reason to question his own commitment to the ethical and religious vision which he held up to his world. Ambrose was not merely a politician, or a naïve or superficial conduit of ideals to which he was less than fully pledged. It fell to yet more fertile minds than his in the later west to go further, but without his intellectual and cultural work many of their achievements would not have been possible.

Jerome

With Jerome (*c.* 347–420), we encounter one whose importance consists squarely in the quality of his scholarship and in his ability to articulate in his own brilliant way ideas nurtured by both eastern and western roots. Jerome spent a good part of his life in the east, and employed a fair part of it in attacking western enemies; yet his mindset was fundamentally a Latin one, and he was anything but an uncritical friend of eastern perspectives and practices. Much of the image we have of his life as holy man, scholar and biblicist is crafted by his skilful self-fashioning, but of the intellectual range and cultural significance of his literary legacy there can be no doubt (Kelly 1975; Duval 1988; Rebenich 1992, 2002; Fürst 2003; Cain and Lössl 2009; Chapter 56 of this volume).

Born in an insignificant town, Stridon in Dalmatia, the son of prosperous Christian parents, Jerome was classically educated to a high level at Rome, where he was baptized. While spending some time in Gaul in his early twenties, he developed an interest in the monastic life, and after a spell at Aquileia he moved to Syria, where he lived for a while as a hermit at Chalcis, east of Antioch, and devoted himself to language study, particularly the acquisition of Hebrew. After getting embroiled in a number of quarrels with other hermits, he found his life in the desert an excessive strain, and he returned to Antioch where he was ordained a presbyter.

He was in Constantinople in the important years of 380–1, and was able to acquaint himself with the cream of contemporary Greek writing, supplementing his experience in exegetical techniques with a deeper reading in the big Christological issues of the day. Back in Rome from 382 to 385, he acted as de facto assistant to the ageing pope Damasus, and formed close friendships with a number of aristocratic Christian women, to whom he became a spiritual tutor and counsellor. His literary

gifts were immediately obvious, and his elegant epistles, brilliant treatises and eloquent protreptics for ascetic virtues appeared to promise him great things, perhaps the chair of Damasus himself. But his bitingly satirical attacks on the *mores* of the Roman clergy also made him deeply unpopular with his ecclesiastical peers, who saw it as rather anomalous that he was ardently preaching the values of self-denial and criticizing them for their failures while he enjoyed delicately close relations with his female patrons, especially the wealthy widow, Paula (Cain 2013: 1–6). So long as Jerome enjoyed Damasus' patronage, little could be done, but on the advent of Siricius he was investigated, condemned and effectively banished from Rome. After a period of travel around the east, including Egypt, accompanied by his entourage of devoted women, he settled in Bethlehem in 386 and established a monastic community, financed initially with Paula's wealth; Paula herself set up a convent nearby. The rest of his life was devoted to study, writing and teaching, and the administration of what amounted to a fairly liberal ascetic regime.

A bibliophile from an early age, Jerome stands out as the most learned of the western Fathers, and one of the greatest biblical scholars in the history of the church (Kamesar 2013). His most remarkable achievement was his new translation of the Scriptures, launched by a commission from Damasus. The Latin Bible of the fourth century was notoriously corrupt, with differing versions in existence in Gaul, North Africa and Italy. Jerome famously remarks that there were almost as many textual forms as they were manuscripts (*Epistle Prefatory to the Gospels*, addressed to Damasus). A new edition was sorely needed. It is a mistake, however, to think that Jerome's work proceeded according to a uniform plan, or to imagine that he was personally responsible for every part of what we have come to think of as the *editio vulgata*. His initial project was to produce a new rendering of the four gospels – not so much a fresh translation of the Greek as a synthesis of some of the existing Latin versions in conformity with the Greek text. The completed work was presented to Damasus shortly before his death in 384. This was followed by a new version of the Psalter, a rapid and rather crude rendering of the Septuagint (traditionally, but unreliably, associated with the Roman Psalter, the standard Roman version until the time of pope Pius V in the sixteenth century). In *c.* 392, Jerome was able to replace this with another translation, the so-called 'Gallican Psalter' (so named after its subsequent popularity in Gaul), which used the text of the Septuagint given in Origen's massive *Hexapla*. Further work on other parts of the Old Testament convinced him that any translation relying only on a Greek text was simply not good enough: it was necessary to go back to the *veritas Hebraica* itself. As a rare example of a *vir trilinguis*, a scholar competent not just in Greek and Latin but in the prized Hebrew as well, he was exceptionally well-equipped to take up the challenge, and he embarked on a completely new rendering of the Hebrew Scriptures. Pursued intermittently, the work occupied about a decade and a half of his life, from 390/1 until 405/6. It included a third recension of the Psalter, based on the Hebrew, though this version never attained the liturgical popularity of its 'Gallican' predecessor, which was ultimately incorporated into the Vulgate manuscripts in its stead.

Jerome's return to the Hebrew was ground-breaking, not least because he urged an adherence to a Hebrew canon and argued that the deuterocanonical Greek texts included in the Septuagint but rejected by non-Hellenistic Judaism were to be regarded as apocryphal. His work was also controversial. He was sharply criticized by Augustine and others, who argued that he was in danger of relapsing into a Judaizing faith by abandoning the Greek antecedents of the Bible as it had come to be known in the west. Jerome could hardly be faulted, however, for his linguistic rigour, or for the care with which he set about his research. Much influenced by the example of the great Origen, he took Bible study as a thoroughly serious business. He enquired into questions of topography and etymology, expanding on existing reference manuals in Greek and drawing also on rabbinical wisdom. He produced major technical commentaries which sought to discuss, often in painstaking detail, textual and philological issues. The most valuable of these are on the prophets and on Genesis (Kamesar 1993; Hayward 1995).

Exegetically, Jerome's tastes were eclectic, reflecting the range of his influences (Duval 1973; Jay 1985; Brown 1992; Cain and Lössl 2009: pt. II; Kamesar 2013). Overall, a concern for the literal sense of Scripture predominates, but there is considerable room for spiritual interpretation as well.

In the end, he never evolved a consistent methodology and effectively saw no need to do so. It is clear that he pondered a good deal on what it means to practise the art of interpreting Scripture as comprehensively authoritative master-text. Given their piecemeal release over a period of years, his biblical translations themselves are patchy in quality, and it took time for them to gain acceptance; they were used alongside existing versions for some while. In the end, however, the obvious superiority of their scholarship to anything that had gone before in the west won them the recognition they deserved, and from the sixth century onwards they started to be collected into a new Vulgate Bible. The remainder of the New Testament was not translated by Jerome, and the identity of its reviser(s) remains enigmatic. It is cited first by Pelagius in his work on Paul, and one guess has been that an associate of his was involved in it. The oldest extant manuscript of the Vulgate, the Codex Amiatinus, was produced in Northumberland in the last years of the seventh century, but only in the ninth century did the new collection become a standard text in any meaningful sense, and attempts to homogenize it went on for centuries after that.

The other side to Jerome, already to be glimpsed in the acerbic letters with which he had mocked the clergy of Rome, was his fondness for invective. Almost his entire career was littered with controversy, and he left broken relationships everywhere. For many years he was an ardent devotee of Origen and translated a whole series of his homilies into Latin. In the fierce controversy that flared up surrounding Origen's theology in the last years of the fourth century (Clark 1992), he changed his mind, partly under the influence of Epiphanius of Salamis, and became a bitter and tendentious opponent. Matters were not helped when his old friend Rufinus of Aquileia published a new (and rather free) translation of Origen's *De principiis*, in a bid to demonstrate that their former mentor was indeed orthodox, and referred in his preface to Jerome's earlier support for him. The friendship of Rufinus and Jerome was no more, and the ensuing years witnessed a bitter war between the two, during which Jerome released his own translation of *De principiis* to prove just how heretical Origen really was (this work is now lost). Again, positive evaluation of Ambrose's contributions to the subject of virginity soon gave way to scathing denunciations of Ambrose's lack of originality. More predictable and impassioned salvos were fired at foes such as Helvidius, the Roman layman who denied the *post partum* virginity of Mary, and Jovinian, the monk whose anti-ascetic ideology also evoked the ire of Ambrose and Augustine (Hunter 2007). Vigilantius, a priest from Aquitania, visited Bethlehem in 395, and his stay ended in a quarrel: years later, Jerome was accusing him of opposing sacred ideals such as clerical celibacy and the principles expressed in the cult of the martyrs.

Jerome's propensity to berate his opponents while constructing his models of asceticism and Christian moral identity produced the most brilliant satirical writing of late antiquity (Wiesen 1964). Vital as his biblical and historical work was, his epistles (Cain 2009) and polemical treatises make for far more entertaining reading than the technicalities of his commentaries or the hagiographical vignettes he produced to celebrate the lives of various eastern hermits. But even his other texts, like his catalogue of eminent Christian writers before him, *De viris illustribus* (the first example of a patrology), contain their share of caustic humour. The downside, apart from the obvious poisoning of so many of his relationships, was that his contributions to theological debate were not always very acute. Even in his last years, spent attacking Pelagianism, he showed greater ability to vilify his opponents than to address the doctrinal issues they were raising.

It would not be hard to show that many of the accusations Jerome levelled at his foes and critics reflected deeper-seated insecurities and struggles within his own psyche – not least over the ambiguities of sexuality and self-denial, or over his relationship to a *saeculum* whose literary legacy he held dearly yet uneasily. The most obvious sign of the latter tension is his famous dream in which he was turned away from heaven for being a Ciceronian, not a Christian, and his vow to devote himself thenceforth to sacred texts rather than to the classics (*Epistle* 22.30) – a pose later amended to the claim that the best features of Latin literature could in fact be turned to good use (*Ep*. 70) (Hagendahl 1958: 318–28). A large number of European paintings depict Jerome in the wilderness, beating his chest with a stone to drive out the temptation to pursue classical Latin literature (see Figure 31.1).

Figure 31.1 *St Jerome in the Wilderness*, 1475–1480 by Bernardino Pinturicchio, in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore. Photo Wikicommons

Jerome did not suffer fools gladly, and to him any sustained dissent to his own principles, moral, doctrinal, liturgical or scholarly, tended to look like the effrontery of a fool. The genius which made him the giant that he was brought an arrogance with it, and Jerome hardly looks the better for it. But in an age when Greek forms remained so dominant, he did a huge amount to restore the importance of Christianity's Hebraic inheritance; his enthusiasm was not matched again in the west until the Reformation. His prolific output demonstrated powerfully that the greatest Christian learning could be expressed in Latin, and it helped to craft a particular kind of identity for biblical scholarship as a mode of Christian asceticism in the west. As such, his work belongs not only in a narrative history of theological or spiritual thought; it is also an essential part of the story of late-antique ideas of education and the western history of the book (Williams 2006).

Augustine

None of the figures mentioned thus far, however, comes close in importance to Augustine (354–430), whose influence has pervaded not simply the history of the church but the entire course of western

civilization (Brown 2000 remains unsurpassed; see also Chadwick 1986; Fitzgerald 1999; Bonner 2002; Lancel 2002). Augustine is profiled in Chapter 58 of this volume.

His intellectual and spiritual pilgrimage is famously presented in the first nine books of his *Confessions*, a text which deserves to be placed alongside the greatest works of European literature (O'Donnell 1992). Augustine's mature self-depiction in that work is of course strategic in all kinds of ways and cannot be taken as autobiography in a straightforward sense; still, its story is significant of how he later wished the highlights of his journey to appear (see, generally, Harmless 2010). Born at Thagaste (the modern Souk-Ahras, in Algeria) to a pagan father and a devout Christian mother, Augustine was made a catechumen as a child, but became estranged from the church as an adolescent. A reading of Cicero's (now lost) *Hortensius* inspired him to think seriously about moral and religious issues; disillusioned with the style of the Scriptures, he found himself drawn to alternative philosophies: first to astrology, then to Manichaeism, which seemed to him intellectually superior to the Christian message. He became a teacher of rhetoric, and for a decade, in Carthage and Rome, he remained associated with the Manichees as an *auditor*, or second-grade adherent, which allowed him to avoid the strict ascetic standards imposed upon the higher-tier 'Elect', and to continue to live with his concubine. As his studies in the philosophy of rhetoric became more sophisticated, he grew disenchanted with the Manichaean account of cosmology and its answer to the problem of evil, and he began to explore more sceptical paths. In 384, newly appointed to a professorship of rhetoric at Milan, and plunged into existential crisis (in the interests of his career, he had reluctantly separated from his concubine, the mother of his son, Adeodatus, to become engaged to a young heiress), he went to hear the great Ambrose preach and became deeply impressed by the power of his oratory, particularly his ability to interpret Old Testament texts in allegorical fashion. He also imbibed Platonist ideas by studying Plotinus and Porphyry, and began to resolve some of his difficulties with issues such as the nature of the soul and the question of evil.

His account of his conversion experience of July 386 is a classic: sitting in his garden, worn out physically and mentally, he heard a child's voice calling, *Tolle, lege*, 'Take and read'; turning at random to Rom. 13:13–14 (*Conf.* 8.12.28–30), he felt summoned to abandon sexual licence and 'put on' Christ. Jettisoning career and marriage, he aimed to be baptized. First, he withdrew to a friend's estate at Cassiciacum to recuperate physically and to explore with a group of friends and family some of the great philosophical issues with which he was still wrestling: the nature of happiness, the basis of knowledge, the shape of providence, the immortality of the soul. Their imaginary dialogues on such themes were published in imitation of Cicero's model in the *Tusculan Disputations* (Conybeare 2006). After receiving baptism from Ambrose at Easter 387, he moved to Rome. Following the death of his mother, he returned to North Africa, where for almost three years he lived at Thagaste with a group of friends in a kind of impromptu ascetic community. During this time, he continued to write extensively, seeking to branch out from the general intellectual preoccupations of his time as a teacher of the liberal arts to engage specifically theological questions. In 391, on a trip to the seaport of Hippo Regius, he found himself pressed into ordination as a priest by the elderly local bishop, Valerius. In 395 he became Valerius' co-adjutor, and assumed the office of sole bishop not long afterwards.

He had already issued a series of works against Manichaeism; immersing himself further in the study of Scripture, particularly the epistles of Paul, he expanded his credentials as a theological teacher. His later ideas on sin and grace began to take clear shape (Harrison 2006). He established his episcopal residence as a clerical chapter-house, setting out for its residents a rule expressive of the spiritual ideals of their life together. Cerebral as he was by nature, he proved a hard-working pastor (tracing ever more critical analyses of human nature the more he felt himself confronted with the evidences of sinfulness); like other bishops, he also spent a considerable amount of his time – often to his own great frustration – in civil administrative work, settling property and family disputes, petitioning officials and engaging in other bureaucratic chores. Amidst such demands, he was an exceedingly dedicated and highly popular preacher and engaged in preaching almost every day, either in his own church in Hippo or elsewhere in North Africa, especially in Carthage.

Figure 31.2 *St Augustine in his Study* by Vittore Carpaccio, 1502; Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, Venice. Wikicommons

Augustine's classical rhetorical training and experience as a teacher were naturally of great significance to his preaching abilities. Though his assessment of the need for the reshaping of secular learning would become more radical over time (Pollmann and Vessey 2007), he continued to believe that traditional scholarly disciplines could facilitate Christian communication. His own preaching style remained, however, generally simple and direct (Bright 1999; Van Fleteren and Schnaubelt 2001; Müller 2012; Cameron 2012a). He made much of figural exegesis, and Christ was everywhere to be found in his Scriptures (Cameron 2012b). While his preaching could certainly be highly polemical, critical of social *mores*, erroneous philosophies and false teaching, it was also practical, aimed at the formation of a people. To that end, it persistently holds up the redemptive, therapeutic and evocative significance of the incarnation as fundamental to a Christian application of the biblical text. Moral and spiritual perfection was unattainable, and social ethics in particular had to be realistic (Clair 2016), but grace itself was real, and obedience and perseverance mattered. Augustine's sermons have become a fascinating field of study in their own right, their range extended by remarkable discoveries of further texts in modern times (Brown 2000: 441–81).

When Augustine died on 28 August 430, while Hippo was being besieged by the Vandals, he left an enormous literary legacy, much of which has survived intact, his library having mercifully escaped the fires which destroyed much of his city the following year. He left hundreds of books, treatises, letters and homilies. He seemed to write on almost everything, providing scholars with endless scope to write about him ever after (often, of course, he is far clearer and more interesting himself). There are vast pastoral treatises on John's gospel and the Psalms, drawing on his sermons. There is his huge dogmatic study on the Trinity (*De Trinitate*), composed over twenty years, the greatest of its genre in western theology, its arguments and legacy much misread in modernity (Ayres 2010; Gioia 2016). There is his learned enquiry into the relationship between hermeneutics, preaching and culture (*De doctrina Christiana*), a text profoundly influential for subsequent western interpretation (Arnold and Bright 1995). There is his magisterial exploration of history and society, visualized in terms of the contrasting purposes of God and human agency – part apologetic, part polemic, part political analysis and philosophy of history (*De civitate Dei*) (Markus 1970; O'Daly 1999). And then there are all his other exegetical, moral, philosophical and polemical texts – on subjects ranging from the exposition of Genesis to theories of rhythm (*De musica*), from the origins of evil to the merits of chaste widowhood, from the sin of lying to the

correct places in which to bury the dead (*De cura pro mortuis gerenda*). Isidore of Seville (*c.* 560–636) was not joking when he recalled the saying that anyone who claimed to have read all of Augustine must be a liar (*PL* 83.1109).

A great deal of Augustine's output had its origins in controversy. He spent his early years attacking the Manichees; he then moved on to the Donatists, whose dominance in North Africa posed a major practical challenge; the last period of his life, from 412 to 430, was spent in intensifying opposition to the ideas he would array in systemic terms as the evil of Pelagianism. All these positions, he was convinced, required to be tackled head-on, not just because of their influence but because they were *wrong* in intellectual terms. Against his erstwhile associates the Manichees, with their denigration of the Old Testament and their dualistic cosmology which conceptualized evil as a force too powerful for good completely to eliminate, he argued for the primordial goodness of the creator's purpose, the reality of human free-will and the nature of evil as *privatio boni* (Evans 1982). He set out an epistemology of faith, underscoring the importance of religious authority both in texts and in the church. Against the Donatists and their preoccupation with personal holiness and ecclesial purity, he developed the seminal western theology of the sacraments we have already noted. He buttressed his argument that the church on earth was irreducibly a mixed body by asserting a doctrine of predestination, by which it could be said that God alone knows those who are truly his. Against the Pelagians and their contention that divine commands presuppose human capacity freely to comply, he first set out defences of original sin and the need for infant baptism, then elaborated increasingly forceful arguments linking the transmission of Adam's sin with sexual intercourse, and maintaining that human beings are naturally helpless and incapable but for the grace of God's eternal decree which predestines a certain constituency to salvation and also gives them the ability to believe and to persevere to the end.

Augustine's writings are, we might say, everywhere pervaded by his fascination with the fundamental relationship between God and human existence as it is meant to be. Augustine brilliantly reconceives the epistemological and moral preoccupations of ancient philosophy (Rist 1994) in light of a Christian narrative of the creation, redemption and perfection of creatures. He does so not – as has too often been assumed – as some crude synthesis that never properly emerges from Plato's shadow, but as a theological *tour de force*. In the process, his ideas have been important for everything from spirituality to sexuality, from theories of cognition to understandings of contingency.

Whether talking of nature, sin and grace (Harrison 2000); of the relationship between self-love and love for God (O'Donovan 1980); of the nature of beauty (Harrison 1992); of memory and time (O'Daly 1987; Hochschild 2012); of meditation and cognitive development (Stock 1996), for Augustine intellectual expression was always intensely personal and contemplative (Kenney 2015). Truth, for him, mattered utterly, and the search for it could never be, in the nature of things, a dilettante diversion from some other, ostensibly more 'real' world: it was bound up with the knowledge of the God who had created creatures for the end of knowing him first, and all things else as his (Drever 2013). Augustine's genius lay in his ability to communicate his vast, penetrating enquiries in ways that remained highly personal but also transcendent of his own contexts. Ultimately, he came to believe that the quest to which he had devoted himself was basic to the creator's design for creatures; the real rest we crave, intellectual and spiritual, is found only relationally in the God who made us; in spite of the enormity of human evil and all that it has produced, God had made it possible for the alienated to return to their true home in fellowship with him.

The fifth and sixth centuries saw the enshrining of a good deal of Augustine's teaching on sin and grace, and the entire course of medieval and Reformation theology was affected by his ideas of the church and salvation. At the same time, critical reactions to his views began in his own lifetime and have never disappeared. Modernity in particular has been full of attempts to blame him for almost everything that has gone wrong in western civilization, and to trace all manner of misanthropies, repressions and denigrations of the world to his pernicious influence. Undoubtedly the history of Augustinianism has its dark sides, and some of the protests have been understandable. Far too often,

however, there has been lazy, generic repudiation rather than an attempt to engage Augustine's own thought: it is frequently far more sophisticated than its glib critics have imagined. Problems and tensions abound in his ideas, no doubt, but beyond all the figures in our period he can seem remarkably contemporary, engaging intellectual issues that remain of perennial fascination.

Pelagianism

Pelagianism, the last of the major theological developments with which we are concerned in this chapter, drew its initial support from the upper classes and intelligentsia of Rome and spread in accordance with their migration, first to areas such as Sicily where they held estates, then, after the fall of Rome, to North Africa and the east. It was essentially a lay movement, and its core ideas were in great measure configured as a theological system only by those who considered them heretical. Pelagius' personal history (Ferguson 1956; Evans 1968; Rees 1988; Bonner 1993; Lamberigts 2000) has been buried beneath an avalanche of personal caricature. He was possibly British by birth (early 350s), and had received an education in classical literature and philosophy by the time he arrived in Rome in the 380s. Though Jerome and Augustine refer to him as a 'monk', he never belonged to any obvious religious community and was never ordained as a priest. He was a layman, but a layman in a period in which many cultivated lay-people, male and female, exercised prominent roles in Roman Christian society.

Pelagius aspired to be a serious exegete and biblical theologian. In an age in which Christianity might well be embraced for opportunistic reasons rather than out of spiritual conviction, he urged that the moral message of Scripture needed to be taken seriously. At a time of deep political uncertainty, when ascetic ideals seemed to many aristocratic Christians to be incompatible with any significant secular involvement, he attracted rich patrons and inspired young disciples with his pleas for strong commitment. He stood in direct opposition to Manichaeism, whose resignation at the injustices of an intrinsically corrupt material world had found considerable support among Rome's intellectuals. Contrary to the Manichaean logic, human beings were endowed with the precious gift of free-will and were thus (theoretically at least) capable of living sinless lives. Tolerance of sin as an inevitability was unacceptable; there was a divine imperative to pursue holiness. Augustine's famous prayer in *Conf.* 10.29.40; 30.45; 37.60, 'Give what you command and command what you will', seemed to Pelagius to reflect a despairing acceptance of human incapacity, turning the individual into a puppet and undermining the whole basis of moral endeavour.

On the fall of Rome, Pelagius sought refuge in Africa, accompanied by a number of his supporters, most prominent of whom was a lawyer called Celestius, who proved to be of far more combative temperament than his mentor. Pelagius moved on to Palestine soon afterwards, evidently without provoking any particular theological controversy; Celestius remained in Carthage, where he thrust himself into local theological debates on the nature of the soul and the solidarity of the human race in the sin of Adam. Celestius argued that infants were born into the same state that Adam was in prior to his fall, and so baptism was not for the remission of sins but for sanctification. His case was logical enough, but it brought him swift condemnation. When he applied to become a priest, he was denounced for heresy by Paulinus, a deacon of Milan, who happened to be in Carthage on business, and at a local council in 411 his views were condemned. He left for Ephesus, where he succeeded in persuading a more accommodating church community to accept him, and was ordained in 415.

Pelagius, in Palestine, got himself embroiled in the Origenist dispute, quarrelling with Jerome that humans have the capacity by the force of their will to resist evil and attain perfection. By this time, Augustine had emerged from his labours against Donatism, and he began to get involved in the polemic against Celestius. In 415, a Spanish presbyter, Paulus Orosius, arrived in Bethlehem, sent by Augustine. Orosius, already a doughty combatant of Priscillianism in his native country, took up the cause and sought to link Pelagius with Celestius' errors. With the support of John, bishop of Jerusalem, Pelagius successfully defended himself, and at a provincial synod at Diospolis he was

completely exonerated after distancing himself from some of Celestius' more extreme language. The African bishops nevertheless chose to condemn both Pelagius and Celestius in councils at Milevis and Carthage in 416, and took steps to curtail their influence by urging Pope Innocent I to excommunicate them. Very soon after he consented to do so in January 417, however, Innocent died. His successor, Zosimus, was visited by Celestius, who impressed him with his high moral ideals. The African bishops stuck to their guns, and a furious phase of epistolary pamphleteering ensued, as Augustine and his supporters sought to whip up a widespread antagonism to Pelagius and Celestius. The two were condemned by the emperor Honorius in the spring of 418, following a riot in Rome in which the ringleaders (mysteriously) happened to be Pelagians; then, on 1 May, a council of the African church was convened at Carthage which denounced Pelagius, Celestius and their supporters in a series of nine canons, and set out an unequivocal defence of the idea that sin and guilt are both transmitted by heredity. Not long afterwards, Zosimus capitulated to the pressure, acceding to the denunciation of the Pelagians and writing a circular letter, his famous *Tractoria*, to all the principal sees of east and west, requiring subscription to the anti-Pelagian position.

A group of South Italian bishops, led by Julian of Eclanum (*c.* 380–454), refused to comply and were deprived of their sees. Pelagius himself disappeared from sight not long afterwards; probably he died in the east some time before 420. Meanwhile, Julian, an exegetical and systematic theologian of considerable ability (Lössl 2001), embarked on a long and acrimonious war with Augustine that endured to the end of Augustine's days in 430. The papal attitude under Boniface I remained opposed to the Pelagian teachings. Celestius found some sympathy at Ephesus from Nestorius, but the papacy of Celestine I marked an even firmer rejection of the Pelagian cause, and Nestorius did himself no favours by his involvement in the affair when he found himself in other theological troubles of his own at the Council of Ephesus in 431; both he and Celestius were condemned (Wickham 1989).

The Pelagian controversy produced a substantial literary legacy. Pelagius himself wrote a great deal, on themes exegetical, doctrinal and moral-ascetical, but many of the works which circulated under his name are spurious, and others remain uncertain; debate continues on how best to classify them (Morris 1965; Evans 1968). Some of his letters have been preserved among the writings of his opponents, Augustine and Jerome. Pelagius was a reluctant heretic (Rees 1988; Markus 1989; Lamberigts 2000), and 'Pelagianism' as a packaged system of errors was only created gradually by the polemical dexterity of Augustine. Pelagius' Roman writings, especially his commentaries on the letters of Paul (which provide valuable evidence on the Latin texts of the fifth century, and reflect the growing popularity of the Vulgate; see e.g. De Bruyn 1998), are self-consciously traditional on the errors of Arianism and on the doctrine of the Trinity. He deliberately evokes the anti-Manichaean sentiments of Ambrose, Ambrosiaster ('Hilarius') and Augustine. His moralizing dwells on standard ascetical themes: the virtues of constancy in adversity, the dangers of material riches and the merits of virginity. Theologically, his concern was to debunk fatalism and to outline a robust anthropology which would inspire warfare against evil. To blame heredity or to talk of the existential inevitability of sin was, he felt, to seek excuses for failure. The disobedience of Adam constituted a bad example, but human freedom remained, and by effort of will it was possible to resist sin. The issue for Pelagius was not the *necessity* of divine grace, but the *nature* of that grace. Grace lay in the endowment of humanity with the faculties of reason and free-will, and in the provision of another example, counter to Adam's, to enlighten and stimulate these faculties into the performance of moral duty. This example was to be found in the Old Testament law and supremely in the perfect obedience of Christ. Many of the accusations levelled against Pelagius by his critics are not discernible in his surviving writings. His intentions were not to advocate unalloyed human autonomy or a 'do-it-yourself' system of salvation, but to give what he regarded as an appropriate place to human responsibility and moral effort. He would undoubtedly have been uncomfortable with a lot of the views espoused by his followers. Like the Donatists, he strongly upheld the importance of baptism as an initiation into a community called to holy living (unlike them, he does not say much about the relationship of this group to the social entity of the visible church).

Augustine's initial response was lukewarm, consisting chiefly of an insistence on the reality of evil as a universal disease and the consequent necessity of infant baptism to deal with its corrupting effects at the personal level. It was only after the exoneration of Pelagius and Celestius in the east and their claims to be articulating the traditional position that he sensed a challenge to the rigourist theology of North Africa which, to his mind, was the true Catholic faith (Bonner 1972). Had it not been for the collapse of Rome and the impact made by Pelagius in the east, the affair would never have assumed the significance it did, and had it not been for the African church's final success in securing its teaching as the official western one by obtaining Zosimus' condemnation of the Pelagian views in 418, Augustine would never have worked out the synthesis of his logic on sin, grace and predestination. It was in the heat of his bitter dialogue with Julian of Eclanum that he welded together what we think of as the Augustinian doctrine of sin and grace, connecting the transmission of original sin with sexual intercourse and insisting on the absolute moral helplessness of humanity but for the goodness of a God who has predestined some to be saved and left others to be damned. For Augustine, as for Pelagius, a sinless Christ was vital (Keech 2012), but the significance of Christ, while exemplary in essential ways, was divine grace in action in a stronger sense: not just as inspiration, but as constitutive liberation for the enslaved whom God has chosen for salvation.

Augustine's theology did not find immediate favour in the west. Pelagian ideas of one kind or another remained widespread. They continued to enjoy popularity in Britain in the 420s and 430s (Myres 1960; Markus 1986), and in Gaul there was considerable alarm among monastic groups that Augustine had gone too far, undermining human responsibility altogether. The protest, spearheaded by John Cassian (*c.* 360–431/2) and his supporters around Marseilles (Chadwick 1968; Stewart 1998; Casiday 2006), endured in the years following Augustine's death and evoked an uncompromising Augustinian defence from Prosper of Aquitaine (*c.* 390–463) (who later tempered his views markedly). The monks argued that while grace was necessary for salvation, human free-will was a presupposition of the gospel invitation. Their position has misleadingly been dubbed 'semi-Pelagianism', perhaps implying that it deliberately sought to retain the gist of the ideas associated with Pelagius' name while taking on board elements of Augustine's arguments. In fact, they were seeking to distance themselves from both Pelagius and the extremes of Augustine's predestinarianism (Tibiletti 1985).

As Vincent of Lérins (d. before 450) insisted, they saw themselves as upholding a Catholic tradition on nature and grace that the narrower trajectory in Augustine's thought seemed to have abandoned. Vincent's famous 'canon' (*Commonitorium* 2.3), setting out the triple test of ecumenicity, antiquity and universal consent as criterion of orthodoxy, needs to be read against this polemical background. The controversy endured in Gaul into the early sixth century. The course of the debates was considerably affected by the growing prestige of Lérins and Arles as ecclesiastical centres, well capable of writing their own theological agendas (Van Dam 1985). Even when the 'semi-Pelagian' perspective was officially condemned through the influence of Caesarius of Arles (*c.* 470–542) at the Second Council of Orange in 529, the council endorsed a series of dogmatic *capitula* which stopped well short of Augustine's language and repudiated the idea of predestination to damnation. It may be that for many of Gaul's clergy, deeply conservative by temperament, the issues mattered little, given the more immediate challenges they faced from Burgundian and Visigothic Arianism.

As had been the case with Donatism, the assortment of claims woven together as Pelagianism threw into relief some of the enduring differences between the theological traditions of North Africa, Italy and Gaul. The controversy yielded not just a new 'heresy', but a new 'orthodoxy' as well, for Augustine's darker doctrine of sin and predestination ultimately did prevail in the west. Even then, however, many of the core debates rumbled on throughout the Middle Ages, to resurface with a vengeance in the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, in the Jansenist controversies, and in the arguments between Calvinists and Arminians from the seventeenth century onwards. In the wake of Enlightenment assertions of human potential, and the subsequent demise of some that confidence amidst the cultures of a post-modern world, the focus on questions of freedom and determinism remain of pertinence today.

It is doubtless unwise to attach the name 'Pelagian' straightforwardly to any contemporary philosophy, but of the heirs of later fourth- and early fifth-century ideas there are many.

In retrospect

Any survey such as this has to skim along the high points of its terrain, picking out only the giants (both the heroes and the villains, judged from the standpoint of later orthodoxy) who made the most obvious contributions to the intellectual story of the later west. A fuller account of the evidence would have to canvass the parts played by many other key figures. There was the redoubtable Marius Victorinus Afer (*fl.* 360s–370s), celebrated *rhetor* and convert from paganism who produced – inter alia – an important series of Pauline commentaries and intriguing neo-Platonist metaphysic of the Trinity which in certain respects anticipated Augustine. There was Prudentius (348–*c.* 410), Spanish poet and writer of elegant hymns, whose allegorical depiction of the struggle of the Christian soul, the *Psychomachia*, profoundly influenced later generations. There was Paulinus of Nola (*c.* 353–431), scion of a wealthy noble family who gave up career and fortune to devote himself to the life of a sanctified scholar, channelling the energies of his literary gift into the production of an urbane Christian poetry and the maintenance of a wide-ranging correspondence with Christian and pagan peers. There was the elusive 'Ambrosiaster' (*fl.* late fourth century), whose remarkably sophisticated commentaries on the Pauline epistles remained unrivalled until the sixteenth century. There was the missionary-bishop Martin of Tours (d. 397), forever captured as holy man, healer and champion of the weak in the hagiographical *Life* of his disciple, Sulpicius Severus. There was Rufinus (*c.* 345–411), erstwhile friend of Jerome, monk, historian and producer of an important range of Latin translations of Greek texts, many of which would otherwise be lost.

Supremely, there were the vast majority – not just the poets, ascetics, minor preachers and teachers, but all the so-called 'ordinary' Christians – men, women and children – whose individual and collective input to the churches' development was far more profound than any summary of only 'great men' or movements can possibly imply. That people's history, and its material and symbolic as well as intellectual expression, is an indispensable part of the later west's inheritance (Burrus 2005). What we have traced here are just aspects of the roles played by the few, those whose work proved, by dint of their status and influence, programmatic for the narrative that would subsequently unfold. Their bequest is only one starting-point for our understanding of a yet more complex sequel.

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32

CREEDS, COUNCILS AND DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT

Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski

Introduction

In the history of the church creeds, councils and doctrinal developments have been directly interconnected. Questions over beliefs, interpretations of the Scriptures, discipline and liturgical practices have raised questions since the beginning of Christianity. When Christianity received legal status in the Roman empire (the Edict of Milan 313 CE), these debates took place within the public gathering of the synods and councils. But the development, if that is the correct word,[1] of Christian doctrine started much earlier. Christianity, if this generic term applies to the phenomenon of the diversity among Jesus' followers (King 2008: 66–84), from its first moments embraced and publicly confessed a number of paradoxes. These opinions astonished the Jews as well as Christian Graeco-Roman neighbours (e.g. 1 Cor. 1:22). Christians claimed that a humiliated and crucified Jesus of Nazareth is now alive and glorified (e.g. Acts 2:32–33; 4:10; 7:56). They proposed that the Galilean preacher and exorcist (Mark 3:23; Luke 10:18) was the ultimate revelation of the Holy God of Israel (Heb. 1:2). They boldly stated that Jesus' personal opinion about salvation reflected the divine and eternal truth (John 14:6). These views would soon call for rational and coherent justification; as such they would make their way to the doctrine of the universal (i.e. Catholic) church.

During the second century more bold and puzzling claims were put forward: for instance, Justin Martyr (*c.* 100–*c.* 165) argued against a certain Jew, Trypho, that Christianity (a religion that was only 100 years old) now understood better the meaning in the Jewish Scriptures than the Jews themselves (e.g. *Dialogue with Trypho*, 84.3). The bishop of Lyons, Irenaeus, called for a limitation of the divine revelation to only four channels: Mark, Matthew, Luke and John (*Against the Heresies*, 3.11.8). In the same century, Clement of Alexandria maintained that his ecclesiastical community exclusively interpreted the apostolic message in a correct, unspoiled (orthodox) way (*Paedag.*, 3.98.1–2). The development of Christian doctrine in the forthcoming centuries suggested that the Apophatic God existed, as an impenetrable mystery, as the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Three divine persons share one nature, however, each retaining their own individuality. By confirming that all other views were rejected, neither three-theism nor modalism, by the standards of the Great Church, expressed true faith. Why was Christianity in its mainstream tradition so concerned about the strict correctness of the highly speculative creeds? Why did the practice of that doctrinal exactness lead to the persecution of other believers? Neither Second Temple Judaism (in its plurality of forms, see Dunn 1991:

18–36) nor the diversity of Graeco-Roman religions and cults, aspired to argue for the existence of their divinities and for the value of their rituals with such intellectual zeal and dramatic consequences. And, again, why did Christian clergy and monks, unlike the priests and priestesses of Roman religions and Jewish rabbis, persistently quarrel about the nature of God, human will, sin and grace, to name just few controversies?

The scope of this chapter imposes certain serious limits on my discussion. I have chosen only one trajectory of the emerging Christian doctrine focused on the person of Christ (Christology), later concluding with the theology of the Holy Trinity. This subject, in my view, was essential to the formation of Christian thought, worship/prayer and mysticism. It also reflected from the fourth century onwards the crucial link between theology and politics; between the church and the empire. I am aware that my subject is only one thread in the rich tapestry of early Christian theology, which included many other themes (e.g. women and gender), debates (e.g. human freedom and divine grace), conflicts with some compromises, but more often with anathemas proclaimed by local synods and ecumenical councils. This slant on the subject also turns our attention to mainly Greek theologians; others, such as Tertullian (*c.* 160–*c.* 225) and Augustine (354–430) will receive only limited attention. It is impossible to embrace in this essay the riches of Coptic theology (Goehring and Timbe 2007) and Syriac Christianity (Brock 2004: 362–372). I would like to offer an overview of the crucial 'Y-junctions', up to the ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451), which shaped early Christian theology and which still determines modern understanding of Christian dogma. Modern theologians and Christian believers cannot simply return to 'point-zero' and suggest, for example, the inclusion of the *Gospel of Thomas* in the New Testament canon, or the readjustment of the position of the Holy Spirit in relation to the two other persons in the Trinity as proclaimed by the ecumenical Council in Constantinople (381). Still, we can understand better the origins and the context of those ancient declarations of faith which still shape various aspects of modern, ecumenical Christian theology.

The emergence of Christian scriptures and identity

Jesus of Nazareth was a Jew from Galilee and his close followers were his local, rural compatriots, some of them fishermen in the Sea of Galilee, who expected the coming of the Jewish Messiah. Jesus did not write down his stories, nor aspire to reach a wider cosmopolitan audience. Together with his followers, he claimed that there is only one God. Jesus' followers also believed in the election of Israel and the unique covenant through the Torah between the Holy God and his people. They regularly worshipped in the Temple (Dunn 1991: 18–56, 98–116). As far as we can say, neither Jesus of Nazareth nor his first disciples intended to invent a new religion/Christianity (Ashwin-Siejkowski 2009: 9–12).

However, the vital and dramatic events of Jesus' arrest, crucifixion and resurrection totally changed his followers' perception: in the light of the Easter experience they reinterpreted the meaning of Jesus' suffering, death, his earlier teaching and miracles, even the circumstances of his birth. The *Gospel of John* went even further: it highlighted Jesus' pre-existence as the divine Word (Gr. *Logos*). This original process of evolving a whole new set of views about Jesus, his nature, mission and teaching, from its earliest phase, showed a plurality of emphases and theological interests.[2] Jesus was proclaimed as 'the Lord' (Gr. *Kyrios*,[3] e.g. Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Col. 2:6), the 'last Adam' (e.g. 1 Cor. 15:21–22; Heb. 2:6–9), 'divine wisdom' (e.g. 1 Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:1–3), and/or 'the High Priest' (Heb. 7:16). One of the earliest hymns preserved in the *Epistle to Philippians* (2:6–11) glorifies Christ's self-abandonment (Gr. *kenosis*) and later exultation, while the epistle written by Pliny the Younger, Roman governor to the Emperor Trajan at the end of the first century CE, clearly indicates that the local Christians in Asia Minor worshipped Christ as '[a] god' (Pelikan 1971: 173). Pliny's correspondence is important as he was aware that those worshippers of Christ were not Jews any more. These and other sources (e.g. Col. 1:15–20) show that the advance of Christian views about

Figure 32.1 The Sea of Galilee, from Ha-Shekat Beach looking towards Mount Arbel, with modern-day Migdal and Kibbutz Ginosar beyond in the background. Photo Prof. Joan Taylor

the nature and role of Jesus Christ not only originated within the spectrum of Second Temple Judaism but also continued a number of aspects of Jewish theology, which gradually received a new interpretation. In brief, the interpretative, theological transition from memories of Jesus as a Galilean teacher to a more elaborated literal testimony about Christ, the Saviour, was surprisingly continuous, but not smooth or unchallenged. Two further issues have to be signalled at this stage.

Around the turn of the first century, the anonymous author of the *First Epistle of John* puts in his correspondence a noticeable emphasis on Christ's physical existence (e.g. 4:2–3; earlier 1:1–3 and later 4:6–8). Just a decade or two later, the same concern was expressed by one of the Apostolic Fathers, Ignatius, who stressed that Christ was really a human being (*Ep.*, *Trallians*, 9–10). The history of theology labelled the view which challenged the reality of Christ's incarnation as 'docetic/ism' (Gr. *Dokeo* – 'appear to be'). It is clear, however, that some Christians, such as those criticised in the *First Epistle of John*, or by Ignatius, found it difficult, if not impossible, to acknowledge that the divine could dwell in weak, if not shameful, human flesh. Around the same time, yet another challenge came from other Christians, those who still held on to some Jewish values and practices. These Christians, labelled as 'Ebionites' (Heb. 'the poor'), held the view that Jesus was born as all people are, but at his baptism at Jordan he was elected/adopted to be the Son of God (Häkkinen 2005: 268). The latter view was denoted as 'adoptionism' as Christ's divinity was rejected. It is important to remember that these opinions did not originate from a speculative type of theology, but came from a specific interpretation of Christian Scriptures with local communities. Irenaeus (*Against the Heresies*, 1.26.2) and Tertullian (*On the Prescription of Heretics*, 33.5) claimed that the Ebionites used the *Gospel of Matthew*, while rejecting the Pauline epistles. Those commentators built up their understanding

of salvation by focusing on Christ's teaching and mission, with the Scriptures in the centre of their exegesis. For example, the *Gospel of John* was well known to the followers of Valentinus (d. *c.* 165) and his disciples. Some Valentinians produced highly detailed and elaborate commentaries on this Gospel (Heracleon in Thomassen 2010: 173–210) and other Christian documents (Clement of Alexandria, the *Excerpts from Theodotus* in Hill 2004: 211–212). Literary activity during the second century in various Christian milieus delivered an astonishing number of exegetical works. Some of those theologians aimed to amalgamate valuable testimonies about Jesus' salvation in just one 'Gospel' (Tatian, second century); others were happy with a plurality of source. Irenaeus' famous claim restricted the number of Gospels to four, while Marcion's (d. *c.* 160) exegetical attempt aimed to regain the purity of God's revelation and Jesus' teaching by a radical re-edition of Luke's Gospel and some Pauline letters (Moll 2010: 83–106). The richness of Christian literary production is well attested by another second-century author, Clement of Alexandria (*c.* 150–*c.* 215). Clement provides us with many and unique quotations from Christian sources which commented on Jesus' life and salvation.[4]

The open, polyphonic debate among Christians in the second century prompted some theologians to advocate the value of 'the rule of faith' (Lat. *regula fidei*). This rule was not a creed itself (the proclamation/confession of faith), but rather a summary of core-beliefs. First, the bishop of Lyons, Irenaeus (*c.* 130–*c.* 200), proposed a 'rule of faith' which would separate error from truth, or correctness (orthodoxy) from perverse, selective choice (*Against the Heresies*, 1.22.1). Irenaeus wished to establish that sort of measurement not only for his church, but boldly claimed its 'universal' (catholic) dimension (*Against the Heresies*, 1.10.1–2 in Stevenson 1999: 111). In consequence, his measurement could also be used to assess the error in Rome, Asia Minor and North Africa. For Irenaeus, this rule had to be connected with a historical succession and the plain meaning of the Scriptures.[5] Next, the Latin author who wrote some time after Irenaeus, Tertullian of Carthage (*c.* 160–*c.* 225), supported this idea of theological discernment (*On the Prescription of Heretics*, 13 in Stevenson 1999: 165). In his case, 'the rule of faith' was directed against his Christian opponents: among them Valentinians, Marcionites and Basilideans. Clement of Alexandria used this rule in his debate with his adversaries (*Stromata*, 7.93.1–105.5). In the next century, Origen (*c.* 185–*c.* 254) found the rule of faith as a helpful way to demarcate between falsehood and truth (*On First Principles*, 1 in Stevenson 1999: 198–199). These important thinkers, although paradoxically not all of them were later found to be orthodox, give evidence that the need to distinguish between 'error/erroneous' teaching and the 'correct/right-way-of-thinking and believing' gradually appeared in the minds of some Christian intellectuals. The philosophical underpinning conviction was that the truth is one, while error is multiple. Soon, in the case of Tertullian, another conviction was added: first there was truth; then came corruption and error (*On the Prescription of Heretics*, 29).

The apologetic battle during the second and third centuries enhanced the 'rule of faith' as a doctrinal discernment applicable in inter-Christian polemic. However, the Apologists also defended Christianity against Jewish and Graeco-Roman critics. First, for instance, Justin's inventive treatise, the *Dialogue with Trypho*, aimed to prove that Christian faith contained the whole truth about salvation, that the ultimate truth had been disclosed in Jesus' life and teaching. In Justin's presentation, Jews (represented in the treatise by Trypho), did not understand the meaning of the Scriptures (or prophetic utterances), while Christians, those with whom Justin identified himself, explored the Scriptures in the correct way. Second, responding to Graeco-Roman ridicule,[6] the Apologists such as Clement of Alexandria argued that their faith reflected the light of the universal truth, discovered by some ancient sages such as Socrates, or learnt by Plato from . . . Moses (*Stromata*, 1.165.1). Against the accusation of 'novelty',[7] the Apologists claimed that the ancient sages (e.g. Socrates, Heraclitus) were the embodiment of Christian wisdom and virtue (Justin, *First Apology* 46.3 in Stevenson 1999: 61). The Apologists aimed to prove the universal connection of Christianity with the virtuous life of ancient sages and prophets by reference to either the Greek philosophical passion for truth, or the Hebrew oracles now fully revealed as one of Jesus' names (John 14:6). Against the claim that their religion was yet another 'superstition', they highlighted the rational and discursive element within the

Christian faith (Athenagoras of Athens, *Plea*, 8.1–8). The importance of their thoughts and works to the development of the Christian doctrine is irreplaceable. Those first Christian intellectuals used various exegetical and philosophical tools to show the rational and coherent aspects of Christian beliefs. They used arguments to prove that Christianity was not a new, mainly emotional, adherence to an oriental deity, but could be placed and respected among other philosophical schools.

That apologetic activity emerged among different Christian groups alongside preparation to baptism in the name of the 'Father, Son and the Holy Spirit' (e.g. the *Didache*, 7.1–3; Justin, *First Apology*, 61; the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*, 11.26–27; the *Gospel of Philip*, 67.19–22 and earlier 59.11–18).[8] The life of the community was expressed through fellowship which first and foremost recognised the central role of the Redeemer: the recollection and preservation of memoirs of his teaching, miracles, his death and resurrection. Then that life produced charitable works which embraced the less privileged and more vulnerable members of the community. In the context of house-churches, the beliefs of local Christians became a part of the doctrine not yet acclaimed by synods and councils as orthodox, but already strong enough to sow seeds of future dogmas. However, change over time, movement in geographical space, together with a greater assimilation of philosophical language and notions, stimulated theologies which were less concerned with Jesus, the Galilean teacher, and more focused on Christ, the divine Logos and the universal Teacher (Gr. *didaskalos*). Around the middle of the second century, the first 'Y-junction' was definitely reached: Christian communities lost their association with their original Jewish setting and turned towards Graeco-Roman concepts becoming clearly visible in theological literature.

Arius: when scriptures called for a larger theological overview of salvation

The 'rule of faith' as a general method was used by the leading Apologists in their confrontation with their Christian adversaries. Soon, however, mainstream Christianity would adopt new methods of defending and promoting its orthodoxy. When Christianity became acknowledged in the Roman empire (313 CE), the debate about orthodoxy and heresy found new forms and means of discernment. The new forms included the local synods,[9] ecumenical councils and their official declarations, including the creeds. But the path to this next stage began in Alexandria.

Somewhere in the early years of the fourth century, the bishop of Alexandria, Alexander (d. 328), gathered his clergy and inquired about the specific nature of the Christian view of the Holy Trinity (Socrates, *HE*, 1.5 in Stevenson 1999: 321), possibly in connection with liturgical readings or even in order to prepare to address his flock. One of his presbyters, Arius (d. 336), put forward his view which strongly distinguished between the Father's (eternal) existence with the existence of Jesus, which had a defined beginning. In Arius' view, as preserved by a declaration of Arius' faith sent to his bishop around 321, the Son 'had a beginning, but God is without beginning' (Theodoret, *HE*, 1.5.1–4; Epiphanius, *Haer*, 69.6 in Stevenson 1999: 325). Arius' exegesis of the Scriptures and logical tenets defended what he believed was orthodoxy originating in the apostolic tradition and upheld by the Alexandrian church as 'the rule of faith', namely that there is only one God, alone unbegotten and eternal. As to the nature and origin of Jesus, who was also named as the Son of God by Christian tradition, the Son was distinguished from God the Father, as he received his existence at some point, even if that point was before the creation of the world. In brief, the Arian 'creed' would announce that 'there was a time when he (the Son) was not'. The source of the Son's existence, according to Arius' exegesis and theology, was God's will (Athanasius, *On the Synods*, 15 in Stevenson 1999: 331). It has to be pointed out that the long and excruciating debate on the origin and nature of the Son was not a 'duel' but 'a mēlée' (Edwards 2009: 105). It was not an exegetical and theological conflict exclusively between Arius with his followers against Alexander with his defenders. The conflict engaged a whole spectrum of theologians with different views who passionately argued for their understanding of what should be accepted as the orthodox doctrine

Figure 32.2 Alexandria, Kom el-Dikka (fifth/sixth century CE). Photo Prof. Pawel Janiszewski

of God (Ayres 2004: 11–84). The first stage of the debate between Arius and Alexander centred on the crucial theological notion of the origin (or generation) of the Son. While Arius' concern was on the one hand to make a clear distinction between the divine Father and his Son ('the One without beginning' and 'the one with a beginning') and not to amalgamate both into one divine being (*contra* Sabellius and his 'modalism'),[10] on the other hand, Arius rejected any idea of the division within the divine realm (*contra* Valentinus). In addition, as an exegete, Arius read various Scriptural statements about the Son which showed his human weakness, his inequality with his Father (e.g. John 14:28), change and growth (e.g. Luke 2:52; Phil 2:5–11). In Arius' argument, these characteristics did not confirm the Son's divine origin and nature. However, in Alexander's view, Arius denied Christ's divinity and claimed that Christ was equal with all mankind (Alexander, *Letter of Alexander* in Stevenson 1999: 328). Consequently, Arius placed Christ half-way between God and humanity. Alexander's position, on the contrary, highlighted the co-eternity of the Son with the Father (how could the Father be called father if there was no son?). Like Arius, Alexander and his followers also searched Scripture for quotations which supported their theology. One of the decisive moments in this ongoing theological and exegetical exchange was the appearance of the young deacon Athanasius (*c.* 296–373) on the side of Alexander. Athanasius succeeded Alexander after his death (April 328) and brought into the debate not only his intellectual acumen and Scriptural knowledge, but also a certain theological sense and vision. In brief, Athanasius' stance questioned the possibility of salvation, one of the most vital events in the history of humankind, if the Saviour were only half-way between God and creation. The Saviour must be both fully divine and fully human in order to bring humanity back to its Creator and God's grace to all people. Athanasius' theological intuition lifted his mind away from the search for the arguments in the Scriptures led him to reflect on the crucial idea of salvation and its pivotal condition: can reconciliation with God be achieved by the acts of somebody who was only

close to the divine Father? This negative answer to this question prompted a new interpretation of the Scriptures, Apostolic tradition and previous Alexandrian liturgy, where prayers were offered to God 'through Christ'. It boldly pronounced not only the co-existence of the Son with the Father, but also his shared substance (Gr. *homoousios*). This non-Scriptural term was known to second-century Christians, such as the Valentinians, although used in a different context (Clement of Alexandria, the *Excerpts from Theodotus*, 50.1; 53.1; 58.1; for Heracleon see Williams 2001: 134–135). It was also used by Neoplatonist (pagan) philosophers such as Plotinus and Porphyry (Stead 1977: 214–215). Both cases of use did not provide the term with a proper pedigree for the traditional type of theologians such as Arius. In the time of Athanasius, this very term was still highly controversial, if not blasphemous (Sozomen, *HE*, 2.8 in Ayres 2004: 101). At this stage, the development of doctrine, either its progress with the new non-Scriptural terminology or its regress with the heretical (Valentinian) notion applied to the Christian understanding of the Trinity (at least the relationship between the Father and the Son), reached the ears of Constantine who, as the first emperor, accepted Christianity as the religion of his empire. In this crucial moment in the development of doctrine, Christian beliefs and sophisticated arguments were placed in front of the majesty of the emperor; he himself was neither theologian nor philosopher but an army leader and politician. He might even have been confused as various proponents of Christian orthodoxy argued about Christ's status as either 'the alike in essence' (Gr. *homoiousion*), 'the different in essence' (Arians) or 'of the same essence' (Gr. *homoousion*), naming here only three opinions. Christian theology/-ies entered the courts of the emperor's palace, fulfilling the dream of the early Christian Apologists, to beg for favour in front of the Roman emperor.

In this place there is no room to discuss the complexity of Constantine's conversion to Christianity. His response to the crisis in Alexandria was political: as the dispute between Alexandrians quickly became an open disagreement with other Christians risking the divine Constantine's administration and more importantly his army, his personal dream about the unity of the empire under 'one Sun', that is the emperor (i.e. himself), was becoming increasingly disturbed. Constantine issued a letter to his Alexandrian opponents (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 2.70–1 in Ludlow 2009: 113), asking them to cease their ongoing, disruptive quarrel about 'small and very insignificant questions'. He also called for 'a synod', or gathering of church leaders in Nicaea, a city of Bithynia/Asia Minor (Stevenson 1999: 338) in the summer of 325 CE. It is hard to tell who came up with the original idea of the ecclesiastical 'gathering'. Still, it is acknowledged that Constantine sponsored it, while his trustworthy advisor, bishop Ossius, chaired it. Although all Christian bishops of the empire were summoned to the Council, the gathering was attended by around 250–300 leaders (Williams 2001: 67), overwhelmingly from the eastern provinces. It remains unclear whether Arius himself attended the Council; however it is certain that his views were represented by his supporters. The bishops present overwhelmingly agreed to formulate a summary of the Christian orthodox faith, a 'rule of faith' which would demarcate error from truth about Christ's origin. The crucial passage pronounced:

> We believe in . . . and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father as only-begotten, that is, <u>from the substance</u>/*ousias* of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, <u>of one substance</u>/*homoousios* with the Father.
>
> *(Kelly 1952: 215 with my highlights)*

The creed ended with anathemas for its opponents. The importance of this statement for the development of Christian theology lies in the fact that those bishops, not all of whom were well educated in Graeco-Roman philosophy, but rather were readers and teachers, accepted that their faith, which originated in the Scriptures, called for support from non-Scriptural metaphysical ideas (*substance*, *being of one substance* and *eternal generation*). The second important and historical contribution of Nicaea was the promulgation of the creed which reaffirmed and celebrated the authority of the faith declared in baptism. The Nicene Creed in its core-version issued at the Council was not unanimously accepted

among Christians (Williams 2001: 71–81). It led to many decades of further ardent debates, vigorous scrutinies, expulsions of bishops, even persecutions and sufferings, if not martyrdom, on both sides of the debate. The Arians pushed towards the edges of the empire by the Catholics re-emerged with the invasion of the Goths who received this version of Christianity from Ulfilas, 'the bishop of Goths'. Ulfilas himself was consecrated as a Christian bishop by another supporter of Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia (Meyendorff 1989: 23). It has to be pointed out that throughout this crisis it was Arius who represented the more traditional view on Christ. Before Nicaea, Christian theologies subordinated the Son to the divine Father in order to avoid any confusion that these two may be one divinity (modalism). At the same time, they highlighted the unique role of the Son as the mediator between (the apophatic) God and humanity. The Trinity (with still quite a vague idea of the Holy Spirit), as understood before Nicaea and after Nicaea, differed radically. Still, the Nicene expression of faith, which placed the Son on the same level of divinity as his Father and affirmed an exceptional way of the generation of the former, reached and crossed yet another doctrinal turning point. There was no way back from Nicaea, even if Arianism survived and flourished among the Goths, and much later surfaced in sixteenth century after the Reformation, for example, in Poland. The Nicene theological dogma would soon ask a fresh set of questions, this time about the co-existence of two natures (divine and human) in Christ and about the identity of the third person in the Christian notion of God: the Holy Spirit. These forthcoming fervent debates would be led by new generations of Christians who produced a new synthesis of Scriptural exegesis with a Neoplatonic outlook.

The way to Chalcedon

There is a famous oil painting by Rembrandt called *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp* (1632). This rather graphic picture presents a pale dead body of a man on a table surrounded by curious medics who watch with attention as Dr Tulp explains the musculature of the dead man's arm. In this picture, the attention given by the medics to the detail of the body is extremely well captured by the Dutch artist. This picture represents also some important aspects of the theological climate between the Council of Nicaea (325) and Chalcedon (451), where a number of theologians scrutinised various aspects of the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ. Needless to say, nobody wanted to be heretical, while all the disputants held orthodoxy as the highest value. Apollinarius (*c.* 320–*c.* 390), the bishop of Laodicea (*nota bene*, the place known from the *Book of Revelation*, 3:15–22), in Asia Minor, was an old friend of Athanasius of Alexandria. He was not only in the pro-Nicene party, but was also acquainted with Graeco-Roman philosophy. His education is important as in his pastoral ministry he combined his Christian, exegetical approach to the Scriptures with his philosophical outlook. Apollinarius' zeal to promote pro-Nicene Christology (*homoousion*) led him to propose that the divine, eternal Logos (against Arius) became incarnate as a real human being, which according to his anthropology is made of the mind/soul and the body. Through incarnation, the divine Logos entered into human flesh; however, the Logos (here also the mind) replaced the human rational element with the divine one. Jesus of Nazareth, in that picture, was a divine man in his human flesh, however, with a divine mind which replaced his human reason/soul. Apollinarius, one of the most intelligent defenders of orthodoxy, reduced the humanity of the Saviour: Jesus' mind (being divine) was left outside incarnation. Apollinarius believed his own contribution advanced the pro-Nicene doctrine: the divinity of Christ was fully protected by the mind/soul, while his humanity remained fully acknowledged. In addition, Apollinarius' proposal provided an intelligent answer to another Christological dilemma: how a divine being such as Christ can be at the same time 'impassible' (not subject of change, increase or diminution as a divine being should be) and 'changeable' or vulnerable as all human beings are? Apollonarius' Christ was impassible because of his mind/soul, yet also fallible because of his body. Among Apollinarius' critics, the vital problem and error lay in his view of the incarnation: the lack of human mind/soul revealed the incompleteness of the incarnation and in consequence, the failure of salvation: the human mind/soul would not be redeemed.[11] At first, synods in Rome (374; 376/7) condemned Apollinarius' views, then

ultimately the second ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381) marked his theology as heretical. The pro-Nicene apologist and his disciples ended up on the list of heretics.

Alongside various individual exegetical and philosophical efforts which aimed to enhance the pro-Nicene doctrine, two types of intellectual milieus began to produce rather different theological understandings of Christology and salvation. The Arian crisis originated in Alexandria, the city which had a long intellectual legacy of elaboration of the Scriptures in an allegorical way. That hermeneutical tradition went back to the illustrious Jewish philosopher and exegete, Philo of Alexandria (*c.* 20 BCE–*c.* 50 CE), and was applied to theology by Clement of Alexandria and then by Origen. It was centred on an allegorical (Gr. *allegorein*)[12] approach to the Scriptural narrative (Simonetti 1994: 5, 35–52). That allegorical tradition was identified with Alexandria and even received the too narrow name 'Alexandrian school'.[13] The emergence of an alternative method of interpretation, usually denoted as the 'Antiochene school', requires explanation. It was not an institutional organisation (i.e. a school) with one teacher and a group of disciples, but rather an association of scholars who shared a similar approach to exegesis and theology, which valued the literal and historical meaning of the Scriptural narrative. The opposition, Alexandrian *versus* Antiochene exegesis, was based on Antiochene attempts to bring balance to hyper-allegorical, esoteric commentaries of the Alexandrians (Young 2007: 182). Famous representatives of the Antiochene style included Diodore of Tarsus (d. *c.* 390), Theodore of Mopsuestia (*c.* 350–428), Thedoret of Cyrrhus (*c.* 393–*c.* 460) and John Chrysostom (*c.* 347–407). Within their spectrum of attraction and influence was yet another disciple, Nestorius (*c.* 351–d. *c.* 451). He would soon attract the attention of his opponents from the Alexandrian milieu. At this point it should be noted that the Antiochene Christology, analogically to their approach to the written text, began at a literal, historical level: Jesus' incarnation as a fully human being, with his experience of life, moral choices, even solidarity with all people. Christ was like one of us, although in the post-Nicene context he had two natures: human and divine. To illustrate earlier Alexandrian theology, again in its post-Nicene form, the same Christ revealed his divinity, his eternal existence as the divine Logos, that descending to our existence the Saviour brought salvation which was also the expression of the difference between himself and humanity. It is possible to imagine that both approaches with their difference in emphasis could coexist peacefully, and even at some stage complement each other. However, doctrinal development did not often value theological consensus; on the contrary, strong uneasy personalities ignited clashes which often turned into long crises, persecution and suffering, although such controversies also brought further crystallisation of the doctrine. Such was the case of Nestorius.

In the spring of 428, Nestorius, a monk from Antioch with an ascetic reputation and connection with Antiochene theologians, including John Chrysostom, the former bishop of Constantinople, was appointed as John's successor. Like orthodox Christians of his time, Nestorius believed that Christ had two natures: human (as Antiochene, he would put the stress on this one first) and divine. As these two natures could not be mixed, they existed in Christ, Nestorius believed, in a parallel way. The fragile human nature existed alongside the perfect divine. That harmonious viewpoint and orthodoxy in Nestorius' understanding was, however, disputed by some monks in Constantinople who were excited about the growing Marian devotion in which Mary was called 'God-bearer' (Gr. *Theotokos*). That controversial title (how can divinity have a human mother?) provoked Nestorius' response in the form of a sermon. With his ignited zeal to get rid of any heresy in Constantinople, Nestorius posed a highly inquisitive question: can Mary be the mother of that which was divine in Christ, or was she only the mother of that which was human in her Son (Gr. *anthropotokos*)? Accordingly to Nestorius' Christology, where the two natures were parallel and never reached any point of intersection (i.e. Apollinarius' theory), there could be only one answer, which reflected what he believed Christian orthodoxy to be: Mary was the mother of Jesus' humanity, not his divinity. The latter had its origin in God the Father. Again, as on many previous occasions (Arius, Apollinarius), now Nestorius could also find clear Scriptural references which would support that view. Jesus from the Scriptures had quite a clear idea of his divine origin (e.g. Luke 2:49) and Nestorius' coherent opinion was also convincing

to some degree.[14] Nonetheless, his logic clashed with the devotion spread through Constantinople where even the emperor's sister, Pulcheria, herself a virgin regarding Mary as her personal patron, felt offended by Nestorius' sermon and conclusion. As the consternation in Constantinople reached other Christian centres, it is not surprising that the Patriarch of Alexandria, the city that was in an ongoing competition with Constantinople over its place in the ranking of the hierarchy of places in Christendom, responded vigorously to Nestorius' preaching. His reaction had also a political agenda. At the end of the same year, 428, Cyril of Alexandria (b. *c.* 375/80–d. 444) attacked Nestorius, having earlier informed the bishop of Rome (the pope), Celestine I (d. 432), about Nestorius' opinions. I have mentioned above Nestorius' difficult character; a similar note can be made about Cyril (Isidore of Pelusium, *Ep.* 1.310 in Stevenson 1989: 319). The Patriarch of Alexandria was a highly skilful leader of his church, a very strong character, but also an effective, pragmatic and determined politician. During his leadership, a local Neoplatonic philosopher, Hypathia, was murdered by a Christian mob and, although Cyril was probably not personally involved in that killing, his entourage, agents and supporters knew about the plot against her (Haas 1997: 313). As an Alexandrian theologian, Cyril was faithful to his own tradition with the now highly regarded authority of Saint Athanasius. For Cyril, the vital issue was in the unity of the divine Logos (before and after incarnation) and being born from Mary. He did not change: he was the Son of the divine Father. In brief, Mary was *Theotokos*; she gave birth to her Son, who was as one person, human and divine, and in consequence after incarnation his divinity could not be separated from his humanity. Cyril endorsed an Alexandrian theological notion of 'interchange of proprieties' (Lat. *communicatio idiomatum*), which attached the proprieties of one of Christ's natures (here: human, born of Mary) to the other (here: divine). Therefore, it was possible to argue that not only was the divine Christ born of Mary, but also the divine Logos died on the cross. In his astute approach to the conflict with Nestorius, Cyril sent a series of dogmatic letters to him demanding that the patriarch of Constantinople renounce his opinion and accept the correction

Figure 32.3 Ephesus, the way from the theatre to the harbour. Photo Prof. Pawel Janiszewski

proposed by the Patriarch of Alexandria. Nestorius rejected both the letters and Cyril's theology. The polemic and a different theological dispute reached the emperor Theodosius II, who called the third ecumenical Council in Ephesus (431). Under Cyril's leadership, the Council deposed Nestorius and proclaimed his teaching unorthodox. It also affirmed Mary's title *Theotokos*, pronouncing that she was the mother of Christ's divinity, not only his humanity.

The whole debate between Cyril and Nestorius highlighted three important issues for Christian doctrine in the fifth century. First, in relation to Christology, it opened yet another level of enquiry about the unity of natures in Jesus Christ. The divine/eternal origin of Christ was now a part of orthodoxy; however, the correlation of both natures raised many questions. There was ongoing philosophical debate: how were the immaterial and material elements of human nature are correlated (i.e. the soul/mind and the body)? What was more complicated for Christian theologians, as the personhood of the Saviour is without analogy to any other beings, was that they were aware of Christ's uniqueness and the problem arising from that. At this point the previous, rather general, doctrinal statement of Nicaea was no longer sufficient. Cyril, while pondering this question, proposed that in Christ, his mind/spirit and body coexisted in an inexpressible way that goes beyond understanding, existing *without confusion*, *without change* and *without alteration* (Ludlow 2009: 202). The negative aspect of this statement is clearly noticeable; the exact nature of that union seems to be impenetrable to the human mind and faith. Second, this inquisitiveness had a very important impact on the understanding of salvation, the ancient axiom that through the incarnation salvation redeemed the whole of human nature; it asked for reaffirmation that all elements of the human being, independently of the philosophical system (body and soul; body, mind and spirit) were included in redemption. Third, the crisis caused by Nestorius' radical preaching not only caused a theological, equally radical, response, but by the fifth century fully involved ecclesiastical and secular politics of the empire. The outcome of the third ecumenical Council in Ephesus was not only the reaffirmation of the Nicene Creed, but the addition of further specification of two ways of being eternally 'begotten of the Father' and in the last days 'born of Mary', so called 'the Formula of Union' (Cyril, *Ep*. 39 in Stevenson 1989: 314). In consequence, Nestorius was removed from his episcopal see in Constantinople and exiled to Egypt, under Cyril's jurisdiction. However, he never changed his views.

The next and final stage in this debate drew yet another radical conclusion from the emerging orthodox theology. Eutyches (*c*. 378–454) entered the scene of doctrinal discussion as an archimandrite of a monastery at Constantinople. Eutyches wished to eradicate any sign of pro-Nestorian views about two

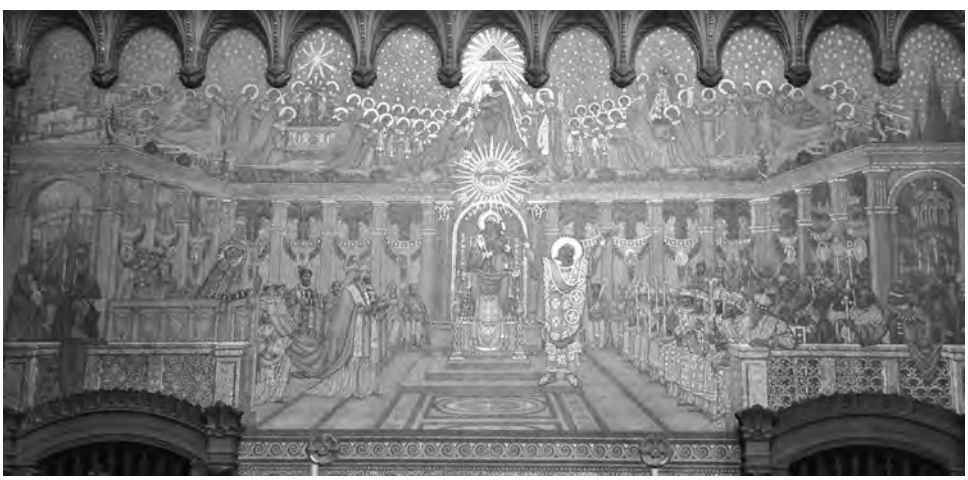

Figure 32.4 The third ecumenical Council, Ephesus, 431 CE; modern mosaic showing Cyril in the middle with Mary and the child; in the Basilica Notre-Dame de Fourvières, Lyon. Photo Wikimedia Commons; author Philippe Alès

parallel natures of Christ; however, he was not convinced about the truth of the 'Formula of Union'. His own reflection on Christ proposed radical opposition to Nestorius: there were not two natures in Christ, but one (Gr. *Monos* – 'one' and *physis* – 'nature'). Eutyches not only reduced two natures to one, which amalgamated two after the incarnation, but also challenged the highly careful notions used by Cyril in his account of the co-existence of Christ's soul/mind and body. His followers, labelled as 'Monophysites', well represented in the monastic milieu, aimed to gain acceptance of their views as orthodox at the 'Robber Synod' of Ephesus (449). As the current patriarch of Constantinople, Flavian (d. *c.* 449) recognised the danger of Eutyches' opinion and his strong position among the monks. He asked for help to support his case against the Monophysites from two other metropolises: Rome with its Bishop Leo, and Alexandria, with its patriarch Discoros (d. 454). They had already been informed about Eutyches' stance by himself; while Discoros found Eutyches' views acceptable, Leo in his letter to Flavian (known as the *Tome of Leo*) condemned Eutyches together with his new ally Discoros. This letter, not only political in its meaning but also highly important in its theology, would become one of the founding documents in the forthcoming council. It looked as if the eastern churches of the empire were again approaching yet another phase of doctrinal turmoil, and the highest authority of the Christian emperor was needed to find the way out by means of yet another council. The new emperor Marcian, who married Pulcherina (known from her opposition to Nestorius, and a previously devoted virgin who changed her mind and married Marcian), exiled Eutyches in 450. He also summoned the ecumenical Council at Chalcedon in 451 in order to correct the outcomes of the 'Robber Synod' (449). The renowned statement of Chalcedon endorsed the Nicene Creed together with the 'Formula of Union' and provided Christians with a refreshed insight into the mystery of Christ:

> In agreement, therefore, with the holy fathers, we all unanimously teach that we should confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same Son, the same perfect in Godhead [against the Arians] and the same perfect in manhood [against Apollinarius], truly God [against the Arians] and truly man, the same of a rational soul and body [against Apollinarius], consubstantial [Gr. *homoousios*, against the Arians] with the Father in Godhead [against the Arians], and the same consubstantial with us in manhood, like us in all things [against Apollinarius] except sin; *begotten from the Father before the ages as regards his Godhead, and in the last days, the same*, [see, 'the Formula of Union'] because of us and because of our salvation begotten from the Virgin Mary the *Theotokos* [against Nestorius] as regards his manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, made known in two natures [against Eutyches] *without confusion*, *without change*, *without division*, *without separation*, the difference of the natures being by no means removed because of the union [against Eutyches], but the property of each nature being preserved and coalescing [Gr. *syntrechousēs* or 'comes together'] in one *prosōpon* and one *hypostasis* – not parted or divided into two *prosōpa* [persons], but one and the same Son, only-begotten, divine Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets of old and Jesus Christ Himself have taught us about Him and the creed of our fathers has handed down.
>
> *(Kelly 1977: 339–340, italics added)*

As in the previous case of the Council of Nicaea, the gathering of the bishops in Chalcedon and this important doctrinal summary of the Christian (orthodox) faith did not end the debate on Christ's two natures. It produced even greater diversity among Christians, as some, such as the monks in Palestine (later their view was changed, Perrone 1980), Egypt (Copts) and Syria rejected the Chalcedonian definition. Yet again, theological confrontation produced martyrs on all sides of the dispute (Meyendorff 1989: 188–206). The shortcomings (e.g. Coakley 2002: 163) and the positive contribution of the Chalcedonian statement to the development of the Christian doctrine (Studer 1993: 218–219) still attracts the attention of modern scholars, confirming the irreplaceable status of the council not only during the Patristic period, but also in the ongoing debate on the Christian interpretation of Christ's uniqueness as both a human and divine being.

A more complex understanding of the incarnation and its consequences was not the only trajectory of the development of Christian discourse and orthodoxy. The structure of the Nicene Creed (325) shows that the main priority of this declaration is focused on the Son of God. The priority of the Father is reaffirmed in the first sentence, while the Holy Spirit occupies only half of one line of the creed. This disproportion illustrates the fact that at Nicaea the issue of Christ's origin and status (*homoousios*) attracted the full attention of all who took part in the debate. This debate already emphasised on the correct understanding of the term 'substance', or 'being as such' (Gr. *ousia*); however, since Origen's theological activity, there was yet another important term being discussed describing this time the individuality of a being (Gr. *hypostasis*). Origen started the tradition to apply the term *hypostasis* to each member of the Holy Trinity and, in pre-Nicene theology, these beings were in a specific order: the Son/*hypostasis* was subordinate to the Father/*hypostasis*, while the 'position' of the Spirit did not yet come into question.

The crucial problem after Nicaea in relation to the notion of the Holy Trinity was to reaffirm monotheism (one God) with the Christian revelation about the individuality of the Father, Son and the Spirit which would avoid an amalgam of all three into one divinity (modalism).[15] The greatest contribution to that clarification came from three theologians from Cappadocia (Asia Minor/Turkey). They were: Basil (*c.* 329–379), his younger brother Gregory of Nyssa (*c.* 335–395), and Basil's friend Gregory of Nazianzus (329/30–389/90). Their theological erudition and sensitivity to various dangers in the language used about God allowed them built upon an already established pro-Nicene theology, especially in its Alexandrian tradition, as proposing a view of God's mystery which presented three divine persons (*hypostases*), while sharing one substance (i.e. divine way of existence/*ousia*).

In response to the theology of Macedonius' (d. *c.* 363) followers, who acknowledged the consubstantiality (Gr. *homoousios*) of the Son and the Father, while rejecting the sharing of the same substance by the Spirit, Basil argued, on the basis of the Scriptures, that the Holy Spirit also shared the same divine substance as the Spirit which performs the acts of salvation/illumination appropriate only to God (*On the Holy Spirit*, 9:22–23 in McGrath 2001: 182). In Basil's view, the activity of the Holy Spirit proclaimed in the Scriptures, liturgy (i.e. baptism), prayer and Christian tradition recognised the unity of the Spirit with the Son and the Father. Gregory of Nazianzus enhanced that vision and, as an exegete, pointed out the Johannine expression about the origin of the Spirit who, unlike the begotten Son, 'proceeds' from the Father (John 15:26 in *Oration*, 31.8–11, 14, 15; Bettenson 1984: 113–115). It now became clear that Jesus' origin as begotten of the Father and the Spirit's proceeding from the Father expressed two different ways in the Holy Trinity hinting at two different *hypostases* of the Son and the Spirit who share their divine substance (Gr. *ousia*) with the Father.

Gregory of Nyssa further advanced the theological language about the Trinity. First, he highlighted that the Spirit was indeed by nature divine (*On the Holy Spirit* 23:54). Second, Basil stressed the harmony within the Holy Trinity, meaning all divine actions are interconnected (i.e. all three persons were involved in the creation and redemption of the world), although they performed different roles. There was no confusion in their activity and the realisation of the divine plan of redemption. For that harmonious inter-dependence and coordinated activity (John 10:30; 14:11) Basil used a new theological term 'inter-dwelling' (Gr. *perichoresis* in *On the Holy Spirit*, 45), which would later find its enhancement with John of Damascus (*c.* 655–750). The creed announced in the second ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381), reinterpreted the earlier Nicene confession and endorsed the Trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian Fathers.

Away from the Greek-speaking theologians, an important contribution to the development of the doctrine of the Trinity came from the eminent Latin theologian, Augustine of Hippo (354–430). During twenty years of ongoing reflection, Augustine explored yet another aspect of that central Christian dogma. In his great dogmatic and spiritual oeuvre *On the Trinity*, Augustine took into consideration the Scriptural commandment to love God, aiming to provide his readers with a clear vision and understanding of God's mystery in order to strengthen their love. Looking into the human

experience (love, being loved and the loving one), the common (philosophical) concept of a person (body, mind and spirit), he applied these limited concepts to the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Various expressions of that interconnection between three elements of human life prompted Augustine to carefully argue about their similarity to three divine persons, who were interconnected, could not be reduced to one nor considered as three, independent beings. Augustine's theology on many occasions embraced poetic images and human feelings; although his narrative was still logical, coherent and philosophical, the oeuvre appealed also to the human imagination, passion for being loved and giving love, as well as for better understanding of the Trinity (Ludlow 2009: 176–182; Williams 2009: 845–851). With contributions from both the Cappadocians and Augustine of Hippo, the Christian notion of the Holy Trinity received a vital intellectual and spiritual framework, which combined not only intellectual inquisitiveness but also spiritual magnitude which then inspired Christian liturgy and mysticism in the forthcoming centuries.

Doctrinal development: final observations

There were two main phases of development in the first five centuries. The first and early one was related to the gradual separation from Judaism. The second signified greater openness to various Graeco-Roman philosophical ideas and terminology which were absorbed to various degrees into Christian doctrine (Studer 1996: 305–333). The second phase also embraced the historical moment of the recognition of Christianity as a 'permitted religion' (Lat. *religio licita*). The religion of the Roman empire was shaped in the mode of the current political ideal: as one, true and united under one authority. Now the public, visual liturgy in either post-pagan buildings or newly built churches reflected splendour and majesty. Doctrinal development under either the scrutiny of pagan critics or in polemic with other (heretical) proposals produced a great number of theological models, which aimed to support the faith of the Universal Church of the empire. But Christianity also paid a significant price for its development. In the context of Christology, the dogma about 'the Word made flesh' significantly shifted the original, historical and Scriptural context of the Logos' incarnation into Jewish life and culture into a much more abstract, metaphysical and speculative notion of the two natures and their correlation as proclaimed by the Council of Chalcedon (451). The various aspects of reality of Jesus' life – his teaching and miracles, later his suffering, death and resurrection – all lost their original and crucial connection with the religious climate of his lifetime. In addition, this alteration in social and political context produced an apologetic genre directed against the Jews (*Adversus Iudaeos*). This literature not only shaped the imagination of Christians but also penetrated the style of exegesis and vision of redemption.

Second, the encounter with Graeco-Roman philosophy and its mindset stimulated a number of great debates and helped to define a whole range of theological dilemmas. Even if these new formulations used highly advanced metaphysical and anthropological concepts, they were not born in sterile academic minds and lecture-rooms. They reflected a new desire to know better what is 'true' and 'false' in the Christian understanding of salvation. They reaffirmed the original Christian intuition that salvation came to humanity exclusively through Jesus Christ. Synods and ecumenical councils aimed to express that original, true and unalterable doctrine against, in their view, heretical novelty and innovation (Price 2015: 410). None of the Church Fathers, and indeed their opponents, would enjoy the term 'development' of the Christian doctrine, but rather they would all agree that their proposal expressed what was believed from the beginning of Christianity. This intuition was spelled out by Vincent of Lérins (d. before 450) who proposed in his work (*Commonitorium*, 2.5 in Stevenson 1989: 322) that orthodoxy is a universal reception (Lat. *ab omnibus*), everywhere (Lat. *ubique*), and at all times (*semper*). Certainly, early Christian Apologists would see in his words the echo of their own belief. Synods and councils, as well as Catholic theologians, put great emphasis on their theological axiom: salvation embraced the fullness of human experience, except for sin: that is revolt against God. They also claimed that salvation is God's gift, not a mere human achievement. The second phase rooted Christian doctrine in a particular type of philosophy which dominated late Antiquity;

it translated faith into the language of that Neoplatonic worldview (prioritised invisible over visible; eternal over temporal; spiritual over material) and within that outlook Christians, guided by the councils and dogmas, expressed their beliefs. Again, this process was natural as Christian believers of all stripes thought, argued, but also prayed in that Neoplatonic atmosphere.

Two more elements of the development of the Christian doctrine have to be pointed out at this concluding stage. First, the role of the Christian emperor and the connection between Christendom and empire must be noted. This connection not only provided Christians with freedom from persecution (Constantine the Great), but also allowed them to travel peacefully, to gather in appointed cities, even to sponsor the ecumenical councils. It led to a certain triumphalism: 'our view is the only view'. However, the relationship between the church (or church Fathers, Patriarchs and bishops) and the emperors was not an easy one. Some emperors' open promotion of Christian beliefs led to intolerance against their pagan subjects (e.g. Gratian 359–383); others, such as Theodosius I (347–395), tried to eradicate all forms of Christian heresy. Here doctrine and dogma served as an ideological tool to unite the subjects under one religion and faith. However, not all emperors were 'orthodox' (e.g. pro-Arian Constantius II 317–361; Valens 328–378), yet their powerful authority (Lat. *Dominus*, 'supreme Ruler/Lord', *Aeternitas*, 'perpetual/continuity' or *Conservator generis humani*, 'Preserver of the human race')[16] influenced the life of the church and its teaching. Second, this period witnessed many clashes between church leaders with power, zeal, vision, great faith but also personal pride and ambition. Those theologians, among them the Fathers, were also very canny and effective politicians. Their activity and influence contributed to the advancement of the doctrine on many occasions. In brief, the development of the Christian doctrine did not happen only as a necessary intellectual crystallisation under pressure from various challenges; on the contrary, it included many factors which, if recognised, help us to understand the complexity of that creative period. Was the Christian faith and doctrine more mature after Chalcedon than in the first century? Certainly it was expressed in completely different language for a radically different mentality and changed pastoral needs.

Dedication

For Dan and Christina.

Notes

1 I shall return to this notion in the final part of this essay: 'Doctrinal development: final observations'.
2 See Dunn 1991: 183–207.
3 In Paul's theology, the title *kyrios* highlights Jesus' exclusiveness and the unique nature of his mission. Paul's faith in God remained monotheistic.
4 More in Annewies Van den Hoek (1990: 179–194).
5 *Nota bene*, the issue of historical succession and the plain meaning of the Scriptures as two distinctive characteristics of the 'rule of faith' did not bother other Apologists, such as Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria and Origen. They did not provide any references to the succession of their bishops, and prioritised even less the 'plain' meaning of Scriptures. Still, as I noted above, they value this concept.
6 See the 'Alexamenos Graffito', Figures 9.6 and 9.7 of Chapter 9 in this volume (and in Ferguson 2003: 597).
7 For the motif of Christianity as 'new and mischievous superstition' see Suetonius, *Nero*, 16.2.
8 My selection of these documents aims to show the spectrum of the various early Christian traditions, which referred to the baptism with the Trinitarian formula.
9 Not all synods defended what later became 'orthodoxy'. As we shall see later in this essay, some such as the 'Robber Synod' of Ephesus (449) promoted erroneous theology by the standards of orthodoxy.
10 Sabellius (third century): not much is known about his life, while his teaching, as described by his opponents, presented the Father, the Son and the Spirit as three 'ways/stages' of self-revelation of God ('modalism').
11 Gregory of Nazianzus reiterated the old Christian idiom (*quod non assumptum–non sanatum*): 'what is not assumed is not healed, what is united with God is saved'; see his *Ep.*101.7.32.
12 Allegorical reading was based on the assumption that literal reading, although providing an account, also points to another (hidden) meaning, or even more than one (e.g. moral, theological and mystical).
13 A number of Church Fathers who used the allegorical reading worked outside Alexandria, for example, Eusebius of Caesarea.

14 Although a more inquisitive reading of this proposal might suggest 'a split' within Christ: Mary would give birth only to the human Jesus.
15 See the earlier note 10.
16 Another title *Pontifex Maximus* was rejected by Gratian and Theodosius I.

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33
BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Oskar Skarsaune

Introductory remarks

A quite substantial part of Christian literature in the period covered in this volume is devoted to exposition of the Bible. In other words, the amount of material to be covered in the limited space of this chapter is enormous. It would be illusory even to think of attempting here anything like a complete, comprehensive survey of all biblical interpretation produced in our period.[1] Instead, a selective approach has been chosen. The material selected for treatment is thought to have representative value, so that through it some central currents in the development of biblical interpretation will become visible. An attempt is made to place early Christian interpretation of the Bible in its proper cultural context, which in the beginning was predominantly Hellenistic-Jewish, and gradually became more Hellenistic-pagan.

The Jewish context

The first believers in Jesus were Jews. To say this, of course, is to say the obvious. But it is also to say something of great significance for our theme. The first Christian interpreters of the Bible did not begin from scratch. They were Jews and therefore heirs to a rich tradition of reading the Bible, re-telling the Bible, translating the Bible, interpreting the Bible.

In the first century CE, this Jewish tradition of interpreting the Bible had already developed a rich variety of approaches, methods and concerns. In the land of Israel there was, and had been for a time, a proliferation of different 'schools', *haireseis*, as Josephus calls them; modern scholars call them parties or sects. Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes and Zealots ('The Fourth Philosophy') are enumerated by Josephus, and modern scholars would like to add some more: the Qumran covenanters were certainly related to the Essenes in some way, but possibly not identical with them; priestly scribes might represent a non-sectarian Judaism different from all the above, perhaps there was also a distinct brand of Judaism in Galilee, etc. Many of these had their distinctive approach to the scriptures, different in methods as well as results. If we turn to the vast Jewish diaspora, the spectrum of different traditions of Bible exegesis was hardly less wide.

Not all of these traditions were of equal relevance as contexts for early Christian interpretations of the Bible. Some of them are almost completely unknown to us, so we cannot relate to them anyway. The Christ-movement originated in Jerusalem and the land of Israel, which means that 'Palestinian'

traditions should probably be seen as most relevant during the very first decades after 30 CE.[2] There were no water-tight compartments, however, between the Jews of the Land and the Jews of the diaspora. When there are similarities between the Qumran covenanters by the Dead Sea on the one hand, and their contemporary compatriot Philo in Alexandria on the other, it indicates that Philo was not simply a highly original representative of a local Judaism at Alexandria, but that he also knew and used in his works traditions shared with the learned men in the land of Israel (Borgen 1997).

The biblical interpretation of Jesus and Paul could probably be better understood if we knew more than we do about the interpretations of the Pharisees of that period. Unfortunately we have few primary sources to the pre-70 Pharisees. Josephus got his Pharisaic education in that period, but all his writings were post-70, aimed at a gentile readership, and it is difficult to know how representative he was in his grand interpretative re-telling of the biblical story in *Antiquitates*. The biblical commentaries among the Dead Sea Scrolls are not Pharisaic, but may on occasion interact with Pharisaic exegesis, positively or negatively. Paul was definitely a pre-70 Pharisee, and traces of his Pharisaic schooling are evident in his letters.

Traditionally, many scholars have followed in the footsteps of Strack and Billerbeck (1926–61) in collecting 'parallels' to New Testament passages from the enormous post-70 corpus of rabbinic traditions in the Mishnah, the two Talmuds, and the rabbinic Midrashes and Targums. In recent scholarship the trend has been to understand this rabbinic material not as 'background' to early Christian texts, but rather as polemical responses to them.[3] This does not mean, however, that rabbinic interpretations of biblical texts are of no interest as comparative material when studying early Christian interpretation of scripture (Yuval 2010). Also, comparison with the Dead Sea Scrolls may indicate which traditions in the rabbinic corpus are in fact pre-70.

It is customary to subdivide rabbinic exegesis into two categories: *halachic* and *haggadic*. These terms are stock in trade in rabbinic literature, but are no doubt meaningful also with reference to pre-70 interpreters. The *halacha* is the sum total of the concrete, detailed rulings by which the interpreters of the Law tried to turn the Law of Moses into an exact code of law, and to supplement it where it said nothing concrete. In rabbinic tradition Hillel the Elder (flourished *c.* 20 BCE–15 CE) is credited with the formulation of 'seven rules' of interpretation. All of them are hermeneutical principles from Hellenistic forensic rhetoric and play a fundamental role in rabbinic *halachic* exegesis.[4] The basic aim of these exegetical principles is to derive exact rulings in specific cases from the rather general directives of the biblical Torah.

The attribution of these principles to Hillel may be legend, but the point is that many discussions about details as well as main principles in the Law between Jesus and the contemporary legal experts can often be clarified by reference to Hillel's rules (sometimes also by other principles not formulated by him, but frequently used in early rabbinical sources and the Qumran writings). Daube (1956) made several pioneering attempts at analysis along these lines. Recently Brewer (1992) has undertaken a detailed study of all pre-70 exegeses in rabbinic literature. He finds that they are all halachic, and that they all display the characteristics of this kind of exegesis, which he calls 'nomological'. He discerns five basic principles behind Hillel's and other rules of halachic interpretation: (1) scripture is totally self-consistent (there are no contradictions); (2) every detail in scripture is significant (there is no unnecessary redundancy; apparent repetitions have deeper significance); (3) scripture should be read according to its context; (4) scripture does not have a secondary meaning; (5) there is only one valid text form of scripture. In later rabbinic terminology this kind of exegesis would be called the *peshat*, the 'plain' meaning of the text.

It is not only material in the Gospels that may be elucidated in this context; also in Paul's letters one may often observe the same type of *halachic* reasoning – even in Paul's sometimes quite sophisticated arguments *against* the continued validity of the Law as a means of obtaining righteousness before God!

It should be emphasized that as far as our evidence goes, the author of the Gospel of Matthew is the last Christian author to whom this whole culture of detailed *halachic* exegesis is still familiar.

Very soon, the Christian idea that the Law was *abrogated* in Christ, or that it applied to the Jews exclusively, and not to gentiles, made the whole question of exactly how the Law should be practised quite irrelevant, at least for gentile members of the Christ-movement.

The appropriation and continuation of Jewish *haggadic* exegesis among early followers of Christ is to some extent a different story. It is hardly possible to make a comprehensive statement about the concerns and aims of *haggadic* exegesis. The term derives from the verb *higgid*, 'to tell, narrate', and *haggadic* exegesis is applied primarily to the narrative texts of scripture. Biblical narratives are scrutinized in search of *halachic* precedents, but also moral or theological lessons of a more general character. Sometimes clues are extracted from the texts which are thought to illuminate contemporary events and pressing dilemmas. Also with regard to eschatology and the portrait of the coming Messiah(s), *haggadic* exegesis often informed and enriched the eschatological projection of biblical models. A basic principle behind all this was formulated at a later period: 'As the first redeemer [Moses] – so the last [the Messiah]'.[5] Or, in more general terms: there is a correspondence between patterns of events and actors in the 'classic' history of redemption and in the end-time events.[6] As to exegetical techniques, this type of interpretation parts company with the *halachic* approach outlined above. In *haggadic* exegesis scripture is found to have one or more secondary meanings (of an allegorical type), and often variant readings of the consonantal text are preferred.[7] In later rabbinic tradition this exegesis would be called the *derash* (roughly: 'scrutiny') interpretation of the text.

It would far exceed the scope of the present chapter if we were to expound in any detail how this *haggadic* interpretation is put into practice in the different New Testament writings, and how rich a variety of exegetical techniques are employed.[8] Here it may suffice to say that many New Testament authors evince a great familiarity with *haggadic* details in the Jewish interpretative tradition, to which they allude explicitly or implicitly. One example is when Paul in 1 Cor. 10:4 says that the Israelites in the desert drank from the supernatural rock that *followed* them; he seems to presuppose the rabbinic interpretation of the scriptural doublette in the narratives of Exodus and Numbers: we hear of the same rock (from which Moses drew water) in two places, Exodus 17 (at Rephidim/Horeb) and Numbers 20 (at Kadesh). The rabbis concluded: 'The rock with water ascended with them to the mountain-tops and descended with them into the valleys; wherever Israel dwelled, the rock dwelled with them, opposite the entrance to the Tent of meeting'.[9]

In the same context, Paul states very clearly the principle of correspondence, the 'typical', model-like character of the classical history of salvation: 'These things are warning examples [Greek: *typoi*] for us . . . upon whom the end of the ages has come' (1 Cor. 10:6,11).

In this and other ways exegesis of the scriptures among first-century Christ-followers was deeply embedded in Jewish traditions. And this did not change overnight when we turn to the Christian interpreters of the second and third centuries. When we find that they, too, incorporate Jewish *haggada* in their own expositions – approvingly or as polemic counterpoints – it may often be observed that they cannot have learnt all this from the New Testament or other Christian sources from the first century. They seem rather to be in touch with developments within contemporary Jewish exegesis. In recent research, several scholars have found typically rabbinic *haggadahs* in the Church Fathers that have not been preserved in the rabbinic writings.

Again, one example: towards the end of the fifth book of *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus makes a summary of what he has shown in the preceding treatment. The prophets have all spoken about the blessings to be realized in the millennial kingdom of Christ, concretely upon earth. Regarding the eternal life following the millennium, no prophet saw that far: 'those [are the] things which neither the eye has seen, nor the ear has heard, nor have arisen within the heart of [any] man' – not even to any prophet's eye, ear or heart has this been revealed.[10] The scripture quoted here is Isa. 64:3, in the text form it has in 1 Cor. 2:9. For Irenaeus, this saying of scripture means that the prophets 'saw' the blessings of the earthly millennial kingdom of Christ, but not the subsequent life of the blessed in the world to come. This is all very different from the millenarian ideas of Revelation, and also very different from Justin's millenarian doctrine some decades earlier. It is quite parallel, however,

to roughly contemporary sayings of leading rabbis. The rabbis by that time had begun to distinguish between 'the days of the Messiah' as an intermediate period before the final aeon of life eternal, the 'coming world'.[11] They disagreed as to what the prophets had spoken about: the days of the Messiah or the coming world. In the third century Rabbi Johanan stated his view in the following saying: 'All the prophets prophesied only in respect of the days of the Messiah; but as for the world to come, "No eye has seen – except you, O Lord – what he has prepared for those who wait for him"' [Isa. 64:3].[12] The structure in this eschatological model is strictly parallel to Irenaeus; so is the scriptural testimony chosen to 'prove' it. This parallelism is hardly accidental; it seems there was some kind of contact between eschatological thinking among the rabbis and Christian theologians.

Pesher interpretation

Before we conclude this section on Jewish contexts for early Christian interpretation, we should add a few remarks concerning one point. As is well known, we find in the New Testament a distinct kind of interpretation of prophetical oracles in which the interpretation is simply given through a reference to the event which is supposed to realize the prophecy: 'This happened so that what was said by the prophet should be fulfilled' (e.g. the fulfilment quotations in Matthew and John, and by implication in several of the speeches in Acts). The basic claim here is that the event corresponds to the prediction contained in the text; in other words, the text is a prophecy 'fulfilled' in the event. In making the event occur, God kept his promise contained in the prophecy. At the same time, the prophecy explains the meaning or significance of the event. The biblical text and the historical event interpret each other mutually.

This way of interpreting biblical texts was not new within Judaism. When revolutionary changes took place, when history seemed to take unforeseen twists and turns, Israelites would turn to the scriptures to find explanations and guidance in the new situation. Ultimately, they sought confirmation of their continued identity and *legitimacy* as God's elect people, still under his grace and favour.

The Qumran covenanters by the Dead Sea had to cope with shocking realities: their leader and founder had been rejected and persecuted by the ruling priestly leadership; the Temple was polluted by illegitimate sacrifices and festivals; they themselves were rejected and reduced to marginality within Jewish society; their interpretation of the Law was not recognized by the ruling leadership, etc. For all this, and more, they sought, and found, predictions and explanations in scripture. In so doing, they developed an interpretation they called the *pesher* of the text; *pesher* being an Aramaic term frequently used in the book of Daniel for the interpretation of dreams. In speaking about the *pesher* of the prophetical texts of the Bible, the Qumran covenanters indirectly characterized the prophetical texts as dreams or visions about their own time and circumstances, to be unriddled by inspired interpretation.[13] It seems a development took place: in the earlier Dead Sea texts, single pericopes (passages) from the Bible are given a *pesher* interpretation; later whole books are regarded as coherent visions about the (present) end-time, resulting in full-fledged *pesher* commentaries verse by verse.

Early Christian interpretations of prophetical texts have much in common, from a hermeneutical point of view, with the Qumran *pesher*. But they have a greater thematic unity because of their exclusive Christological focus, and at the same time a greater methodological variety with regard to exegetical techniques.

The distinctively Christian 'proof from prophecy'

The New Testament and the early Fathers

A convenient point of departure is to be found in Paul's *kerygma* summary in 1 Cor. 15:3–5:

> I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received,

* that Christ died for our sins *in accordance with the scriptures*,
* that he was buried,
* that he was raised on the third day *in accordance with the scriptures*,
* and that he appeared to Cephas . . .

It was part of the primitive Christian *kerygma*, the primary proclamation of the faith, that the startling and unexpected aspects of Jesus' messianic career – his death by crucifixion and his resurrection – were in fact not contrary to, but in accordance with the scriptures.

No doubt they were contrary to Jewish expectations with regard to the Davidic Messiah (even if we make allowance for the great diversity in the messianic expectations of the period). Jewish expectations were based on current and widely accepted interpretations of the biblical texts understood to refer to the Messiah(s). The discrepancy between this biblically based picture of the career of the Messiah, and the actual career of Jesus, created the need for *innovative interpretation* of traditional messianic proof-texts, but also innovative selection of *new texts* which had formerly not been taken to refer to the Messiah. In Luke's gospel, this *novelty* of the Christian scriptural 'proof' of the Messiah's career is most vividly brought out on the journey to Emmaus in Luke 24: the risen Christ 'opened' the scriptures so that the disciples could see things in them they had never seen before:

> [The risen Jesus] opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written,
>
> * that the Messiah should suffer
> * and on the third day rise from the dead,
> * and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem'.
>
> *(Luke 24:45–47)*

The novelty was a suffering and risen Messiah gathering a new people of God beyond the boundaries of Israel, 'a people for his name from the gentiles' (Acts 15:14), a new people of God being saved by forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus. In a masterpiece of condensation, Luke has in these few lines pointed out the startling novelties of the Christian *kerygma*, compared with traditional Jewish Messianism, and claimed that precisely these novelties had the full support of scripture.

In a now classic study, Arthur von Ungern-Sternberg[14] showed that this tradition of Christian 'proof from the scriptures'[15] developed with a remarkable degree of continuity and stability from the New Testament right until and inclusive of Eusebius of Caesarea at around 300 CE. To illustrate this continuity in the shortest possible way, we juxtapose here Justin's summary of his scriptural proof (*c.* 150 CE) and that of Irenaeus (*c.* 190 CE), which both continue the line of development begun by Paul's and Luke's summaries above:

> In the books of the Prophets we found Jesus our Christ foretold as
>
> * coming to us born of a virgin, reaching manhood, curing every disease and ailment, raising the dead to life,
> * being hated, unrecognized, and crucified, dying,
> * rising from the dead, ascending into heaven . . .
> * and that he would send certain persons to every nation to make known these things, and that the gentiles rather [than the Jews] would believe in him.
>
> *(Justin,* 1. Apology *31.7)*

> The Church . . . has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith:
>
> (1) in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth . . .
> (2) and in one Christ Jesus the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation
> (3) and in the Holy Spirit, *who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God and the advents [of the Messiah]*:
>
> * the birth from a virgin;
> * and the passion;
> * and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven . . . of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord,
> * and his [second] manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father . . . to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race . . .
>
> *(Irenaeus,* Against Heresies *1.10.1)*

As the excerpt from Irenaeus makes evident, the development of a Christological 'proof from prophecy' is intimately linked with the crystallization of a Christological 'rule of truth' or 'rule of faith', which some decades later was incorporated in the second article of the Old Roman creed.[16] Much more is at stake here than a mere parallel development of two parts of the Christian tradition. The 'rule of faith' serves as the basic exegetical criterion for the development of the biblical 'proof from prophecy'. This is probably indicated already in a famous saying by Ignatius of Antioch at around 110 CE:

> I heard some men saying, 'if I find it not in the charters, I do not believe in the gospel'. And when I said to them that it is in the scriptures, they answered me, 'that is exactly the question'. But to me the charters are Jesus Christ, the inviolable charter is his cross, and death, and resurrection, and the faith which is through him.
>
> *(*To the Philadelphians *8.2)*

It would seem that Ignatius' opponents required a full proof from prophecy for every point in his gospel proclamation. When he says that to him the 'archives' *are* Jesus Christ, his cross and resurrection, this does probably not mean that for Ignatius the Christological creed *replaces* the scriptures, but rather that the Christological rule of faith contains the *hermeneutical canon* according to which the scriptures should be interpreted.

This was no idiosyncrasy of Ignatius; it was to become the common conviction of ecclesiastical theologians. In her fine study of Christian biblical exegesis during the first five centuries, Frances M. Young (1997) has shown that interpreting the scriptures according to the 'rule of faith' was implicit in ecclesiastical exegesis before Irenaeus stated it explicitly, and that it remained operative in later exegetes, and can be shown to form the core of Athanasius' biblical case against the Arians (in the 320s–350s period). The one who interprets scripture apart from the Christology of the creed, says Athanasius, is not in touch with the 'mind' (*dianoia*) of scripture (Young 1997: 17–45).

Having stressed this aspect of basic continuity in the Christological reading of the scriptures, we have to add that there are also elements of development and change in this proof from prophecy tradition. We shall look at some of them.

From different Messiah to Jewish Messiah

We have seen that in the beginning (Paul's traditional *kerygma* in 1 Cor. 15) the focus of the Christological proof from the scriptures was the aspects of Jesus' career that were *not* part of traditional Jewish expectations. The same focus on scriptural 'proof' for things not expected about the Messiah seems to be present in the 'fulfilment quotations' in Matthew: He was born of a virgin, 1:23; already

as a baby he had to flee to Egypt, 2:15; his birth resulted in a massacre, not peace, 2:18; he was called a Nazarene, 2:23; he lived and worked in 'the Galilee of the Gentiles', not Judea, 4:14–16; etc. One observes the same tendency in the fulfilment quotations in John and in the scriptural proof in the early speeches in Acts. The unexpected novelties, first and foremost the cross and the resurrection/ascension, are at the very centre of the proof from prophecy.

In the latest strata of New Testament literature, and in the literature of the second century, we observe, however, an increased use of more traditional messianic proof-texts in the Christological proof. The Christian proof that Jesus is the Messiah in a way becomes 'more Jewish' and 'more complete'. In Justin traditional messianic proof-texts such as Gen. 49:10 (the famous Shilo oracle) and Num. 24:17 (the Star from Jacob – important for the Jewish Messiah Bar Kokhba) are given prominent position and extensive exposition (see Figure 33.1). What we observe is an amplification of the Christian proof-text dossier to include more of the traditional Jewish Messianism. We see Justin Martyr painting a strikingly Jewish portrait of Messiah Jesus and his task, applying to Jesus all the main messianic proof-texts which loom large in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the rabbinical writings – but not in the New Testament.[17]

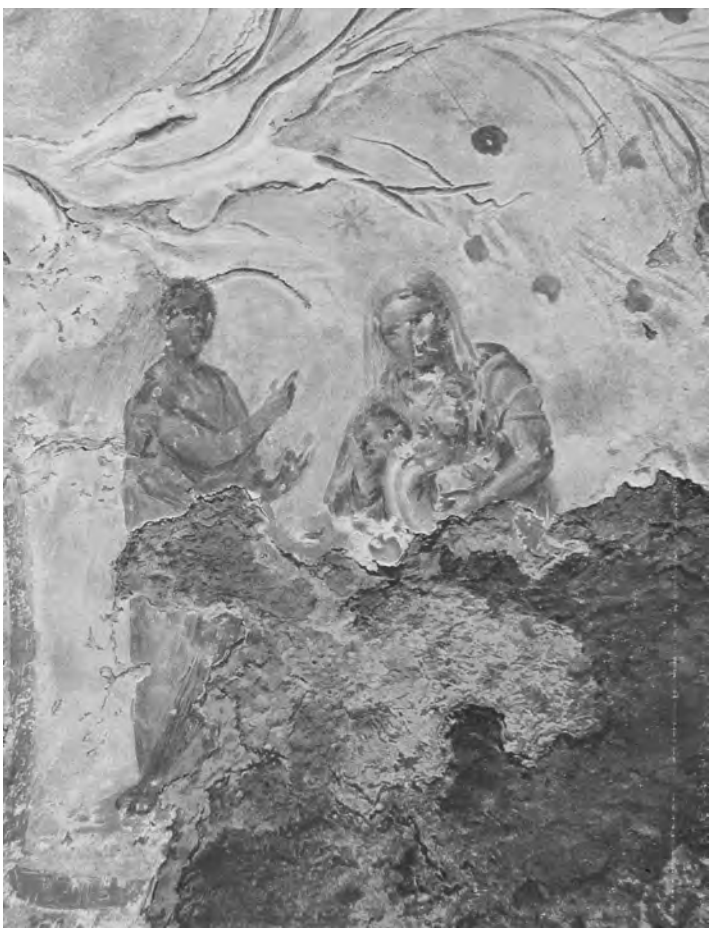

Figure 33.1 Fulfilment of prophecy in early Christian art: fresco of the Virgin Mary with child and a prophet pointing to a star in the Catacomb of Priscilla, Rome, dated *c.* 220–250. Usually interpreted as an illustration to Num. 24:17. Tafel 22 in Wilpert 1903

This development is continued in some later Greek and Latin writers, like Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus and Eusebius,[18] but most of all in the Syriac fathers, like Aphrahat and Ephrem.[19] On the other hand, these fathers in many ways represent the culmination point of this development; in still later Greek and Latin fathers we observe again a greater distance from Jewish Messianism. This probably has to do with the increased importance of Logos Christology compared with Messiah Christology. Or in terms of the emerging creeds: the exegetical 'rule of faith' gradually shifts from an old Roman type of credal summary to the eastern-Nicene type.

From books to testimonies

In the New Testament writings there is normally a quite wide and also an even distribution of the scriptural quotations with regard to the different books of scripture. In other words, most New Testament authors have the biblical books at their fingertips and can choose apposite quotations freely, from a rich and thorough knowledge of the entire biblical text[20] – very much like the rabbis of rabbinical literature.[21] At the same time, however, a certain selection of favourite proof-texts is in the making – a kind of basic proof-texts dossier. In a now classic study of the 'sub-structure of New Testament theology', C. H. Dodd (1965) showed that these texts were not chosen at random, neither were they entirely severed from their biblical context. Instead, Dodd argued, certain scriptural passages of considerable length were found to be particularly relevant as foreshadowing the basic pattern in the New Testament events. When selected phrases from these text-units were quoted, the entire scriptural context of these greater units was called to mind, and other key passages from the same unit can often pop up in the same New Testament context. Long before the concepts of 'sub-text' or 'intertextuality' became fashionable, Dodd demonstrated the great relevance of this phenomenon.

Turning to the evidence of the second century, one observes that the process of forming a set dossier of proof-texts continued, and that the interpretative effort was concentrated more and more on this selection of Christian proof-texts.[22] Some scholars have speculated that this process had a concrete literary basis in a standard anthology (or anthologies) of scriptural proof-texts, a so-called 'testimony book'. The existence of one or more such books is difficult to prove, and the available evidence seems rather to indicate that later Christian writers in general borrowed scriptural quotations as well as exegetical comments on those quotations from earlier Christian writers.[23] In any case there is good reason to speak of a *tradition* of proof-texts (or 'testimonies') and appended interpretations; a tradition we can follow from writer to writer: from the Epistle of Barnabas through Justin, Melito, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Novatian and Cyprian. The quite characteristic feature of this tradition is the almost exclusive concentration on *prophetical predictions* of Jesus' career and the history of the Church – whether these predictions are found in (1) prophetic oracles, (2) legal practices, or (3) 'typical' events contained in scripture. One example from Justin of each of these may suffice to give the reader an idea of how this 'testimony approach' to scripture works.

The fulfilment of prophecy

Our example is Justin's interpretation of Gen. 49:10f, which he regards (as Jewish exegetes did) as a predictive oracle about the Messiah:

(A) The [saying] 'He shall be the expectation of the nations'
(B) shows that men of every nation will look forward to his coming again,
(C) as you can clearly see and be convinced of by the facts . . .
(A) The [saying] 'Binding his foal to the vine . . .
(B) is a symbolic exhibition of the things that would happen to Christ . . .
(C) for an ass's foal was standing at the entrance of a village . . .

(A) The 'washing his robe in the blood of the grape'
(B/C) was predictive of the passion which he was to suffer, cleansing by his blood those who believe on him. For the men who believe on him are what the divine Spirit through the prophet calls a garment . . .

*(*1. Apol. *32.4–8)*

The scheme of this type of exegesis is simple and rather consistent: First (A) a portion of the oracle is quoted, next (B) the interpretation is given, then (C) it is pointed out how this fits some fact or aspect of Jesus' career. As one can see, in the interpretation it is often the case that words or phrases are taken to be figurative or metaphors; one might therefore call these interpretations allegorical. For example, the 'garment' of the Messiah is his community of believers. The purpose of these allegorical interpretations is not, however, to transfer the concrete realities of the prophetic oracle to the realm of abstract virtues or spiritual realities – as in Philo or Origen. It is rather to make the prophetical oracle 'match' its supposed 'fulfilment' concretely and in all details.

The closest parallel to this kind of exegesis occurs in the *pesher* interpretations in the Qumran scrolls. One random example:

(A) 'The lion went there, and the lioness, and the cubs, and there is no one who frightens them' [Nah. 2:12]. (B/C) The interpretation of this concerns the king Demetrius, King of Jawan, who craved to come to Jerusalem . . .

*(*4Q Pesher Nahum*)*

Types in the Law

An example of 'testimony' interpretation of a commandment in the Law, is the following about the paschal lamb:

The mystery of the lamb which God has ordered you to sacrifice as the Passover was a type of Christ, with whose blood the believers . . . anoint their houses, that is, themselves . . . And that lamb you were ordered to roast whole was a symbol of Christ's suffering on the cross. The lamb, while being roasted, resembles the figure of the cross, for one spit is pierced from the lower parts to the head, and one at the back, to which the legs are fastened.

*(*Dialogue with Trypho *40:1–3)*[24]

As one can easily observe, this is very similar to the *typological* interpretation of *narrative texts* that we are to consider next. Legal commandments, when performed, are also about events.

The same typology of Christ as the paschal lamb is developed from the same biblical text, Exodus 12, by Melito of Sardis, but he treats Exodus 12 as a narrative, not Law. He also develops a 'theory' of why God directs salvation history so as to make typological reading of the biblical events possible:

What is said and done is nothing . . . without a comparison and preliminary sketch . . . This is just what happens in the case of a preliminary structure: it does not arise as a finished work, but because of what is going to be visible through its image acting as a model. For this reason a preliminary sketch is made of the future thing out of wax or of clay or of wood, in order that what will soon arise taller in height, and stronger in power, and beautiful in form, and rich in its construction, may be seen through a small and perishable sketch.

(Melito, Peri Pascha *35f)*[25]

Types in narratives

The following is a typical example of Justin's typological reading of scriptural narratives:

> Righteous Noah [with his family] . . . at the Flood . . . eight persons in number, were a symbol of the number of the eighth day, on which our Christ appeared risen from the dead, a day which is however always first in power. For Christ, the first-born of all creation, also became the beginning of a new race, a race regenerated by him through water and faith and wood which contains the mystery of the cross, the same way as Noah was saved by wood as he rode on the waves with his family.
>
> *(*Dial. *138.1f)*

It is debatable whether 'allegorical reading' is the best characterization of this kind of interpretation. Justin is not primarily concerned with single metaphors in the text, which he then transfers one by one to the spiritual realm. He is rather concerned with the total 'picture' presented in the narrative, centred around the 'wood' and 'water' as the pictures of the cross and baptism. To use Frances M. Young's terminology, Justin is exploiting the 'iconic' dimensions of the text.[26]

Having studied these examples of the 'proof from prophecy' or 'testimony' approach to scripture, it is easy to see that this type of interpretation was best suited to single, isolated 'oracles' and 'types'. Scripture is considered as a store-house of such oracles, an inexhaustible source of prophetical predictions. But they are treated one by one, not as part of a continuous, coherent textual whole, such as a biblical book. This exegetical approach almost never resulted in full-fledged verse by verse commentaries on entire biblical books.[27]

The exception comes in one of the last representatives of this tradition, Hippolytus, who wrote commentaries on Daniel and the Song of Songs. But these represent the same hermeneutics as in the

Figure 33.2 Photo of the front of the copy of the Junius Bassus sarcophagus in the Vatican. Photo Reidar Hvalvik

old 'testimony' approach: the whole text of Daniel or Song of Songs is regarded as a continuous series of predictive types or oracles, fulfilled in the story of Jesus and the Church.[28]

Typological interpretation of the Old Testament was not only restricted to the pages of theological works but also found its way into Christian art. A good example is the Junius Bassus sarcophagus from 359 CE (see Figure 33.2).

The five pictures in the lower register are in different ways types or imitations of those in the upper register (see Malbon 1990). The scenes depicted are the following:

Abraham 'sacrificing' Isaac	Peter's arrest	Christ enthroned	Christ's arrest	Pilates' judgment
Job's distress	Adam and Eve	Triumphant entry	Daniel 6	Paul's arrest

The proof from prophecy in changing contexts

It almost goes without saying that the intense concern in this tradition of legitimizing Jesus as the Messiah and the Church as the end-time Israel, must be understood within a Jewish framework. Jewish culture, Jewish questions, Jewish opposition is the constant backdrop to this tradition, not only in its early formative period, but also later. In this tradition we see an important part of early Christian self-definition, first within, later vis-à-vis Judaism. In the beginning, the startling novelties of the Christian *kerygma* are legitimized from the highest Jewish authority, the scriptures. Later, Jesus is legitimized as also fulfilling the more traditional expectations attached to the Jewish Messiah. And the Church of Jews and gentiles is legitimized as the end-time people of God, predicted by all the prophets.

But through the second and third centuries CE, this tradition also acquired secondary functions vis-à-vis the non-Jewish environment, which increasingly became the most important environment of the early Church. First, the fact of prophetical announcement of the gospel events centuries before they happened was a powerful apologetic argument against the main 'flaw' of the Christian kerygma: its newness or lateness. Second, the fact of prediction secured the reliability of the gospel record and the truly divine nature of Jesus. Justin takes advantage of the proof from prophecy in both respects in his *First Apology* to a gentile audience:

> So that nobody should argue against us: 'What excludes [the view] that this man whom you call Christ was a man of merely human origin, and that he did these miracles you speak of by magic art, and so appeared only to be God's son?' – we will bring forward our proofs. We do not trust in hearsay, but must of necessity believe those who prophesied [what happened to Christ] before it came to pass. We see that things have happened and still do happen exactly as was predicted. This will, I think, be the greatest and surest proof for you [gentiles] too . . . [The career of Christ] was prophesied over five thousand years before he appeared, then three thousand, and two thousand, and again one thousand, and once more eight hundred [years before]. For there were new prophets time and again as the generations passed.
>
> *(*1. Apol. *30:1 and 31:8)*[29]

By appropriating, through the 'proof from prophecy', the entire Bible as their own, Christians became heirs to the Jewish apologetic motif of the greater antiquity of Moses compared with Homer and the other wise men of old in Hellenism.[30] In Theophilus of Antioch, this proof of the greater antiquity of the biblical authors receives extended treatment in the third book of *Against Autolycus*.

But there was a third argumentative setting in which the 'proof from prophecy' was re-used in perhaps the most important secondary function. In the debate with Marcion and the Gnostics in the second century CE, one finds an extensive use of the proof-text tradition. Marcion and the Gnostics agreed on one crucial point: the creator God of the Jewish Bible was not identical with the Father, the highest God, from whom Jesus Christ was sent. In addition to that, Marcion agreed with Judaism on another point: Jesus was not the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. Therefore, the traditional Christian 'proof from prophecy' had to be repeated and strengthened in debate with Marcion. One observes this most vividly in Tertullian: large portions of his *Adversus Ioudaeos* recur almost word by word in *Adversus Marcionem*.[31] A similar mechanism is at work in Irenaeus in his debate with the Gnostics.[32] Gnostics generally showed little or no interest in messianic prophecies, and – like Marcion – denied the father-son relationship between Christ and the creator God of the Old Testament. In order to combat this, Irenaeus once again marshals the proof-text tradition. But the 'direction' of the proof has been reversed. While discussing with Jews, one could take the authority of the Old Testament for granted, while the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies in Jesus and the Church were the objects of proof. In debate with Gnostics, it was the other way round: the authority of Jesus as the revealer of truth was uncontested. The very possibility, however, of proving that Jesus had been predicted by the prophets, and that therefore the Old Testament was a revelation given by His Father, was the best possible vindication of the authority and the divine origin of the Old Testament.

In this way, the proof-text tradition is developed and modified in different settings, and also became a cherished piece of supporting argument in internal Christian instruction, as in Irenaeus' *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, or Novatian's *De trinitate*.

Biblical interpretation: from the scriptures to two testaments

In the tradition of scriptural interpretation we have reviewed so far, the Christian scriptures are the same as the Jewish scriptures in Greek, although Christians from Melito of Sardis onwards gave them a new name: the books of the *Old Covenant/Testament*.[33] The scriptures in their entirety were understood primarily as prophetical, they *predicted* the salvific events that had happened with and through Jesus. As prophetical they were also *inspired*, the two concepts of prophecy and inspiration through the Spirit were nearly identical in early Christianity (as they were in much of contemporary Judaism). The New Testament writings were partly the simple *report* on the fulfilment of the scriptures: the Gospel narratives. Partly they were lessons on how to read and interpret the scriptures – this is the way Justin uses Paul's letters. For Justin, the most important material in Romans, for example, is the scriptural quotations of the epistle!

This means: in the 'proof from prophecy' type of interpretation, it is only the Old Testament which is the object of exegesis, not the New Testament writings. The New Testament writings are considered clear and straightforward; they only need to be read and heard; it is the Old Testament which is the scripture in need of interpretation.

This does not mean that the New Testament writings were not accorded high authority before they became the object of explicitly exegetical endeavours. It rather means that texts are seldom subjected to explicitly exegetical procedures until they are perceived as enigmatic, or their interpretation has become controversial. The latter happened to New Testament works primarily in the debate with Marcion and Gnosticism during the second century. This does not mean there was no implicit interpretation of New Testament texts before that time. It means, however, that all interpretative activity was expressed indirectly, through the practical and theoretical *application* the New Testament texts received. In an early writing like *1 Clement*, this is true not only in relation to the rich use of New Testament texts and allusions, it is also to a great extent true of the even richer use of Old Testament texts and examples. There is little if any explicit exegesis of any scriptural texts in this epistle, which quotes and alludes so frequently to both Testaments. The scriptural interpretation is expressed indirectly, through the use that is made of the scriptural and New Testament material.[34]

It is only when we come to the anti-Gnostic or anti-Marcion polemicists of the second century that we encounter for the first time explicit discussions of the meaning and import of New Testament passages.[35] Marcion had confronted the ecclesiastical tradition with a formidable exegetical challenge, indirectly through his 'purged' version of the Gospel text and the text of the (ten) Pauline letters, directly through his highly polemical 'Antitheses'. Very likely Justin was the first to confront him on any broader basis, but his book against Marcion has been lost, and it is Irenaeus' and Tertullian's works that have come down to us. In both writers, we observe the effort to refute Marcion from that part of the New Testament text which he recognized as authentic, be it the 'purged' Gospel or the letters of Paul. Especially with regard to the Pauline letters, we see here the very beginnings of the long and complicated history of interpretation of the Pauline corpus. There were sayings in Paul which were not easily squared with the ecclesiastical rule of faith. How, for example, are we to reconcile the 'resurrection of the flesh' with Paul's saying that 'flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God' (1 Cor. 15:50). This was an issue vis-à-vis the Gnostics also.[36] And with regard to Marcion, there was the additional challenge of proving that the twelve Apostles were in agreement with Paul.

As Hans Von Campenhausen has pointed out, the latter challenge made Irenaeus a pioneer of 'redactional criticism' with regard to the Gospels of Matthew and John (1968: 224–230). Irenaeus needed sources from which to document the authentic theology of the Twelve Apostles. For Peter he used his speeches in Acts, for John he used the Gospel of John and for Matthew he used the Gospel of Matthew. In other words: Irenaeus did not use these Gospels in the ordinary way, as sources to Jesus' doctrine, but as sources to the theology of the evangelists!

Just as was the case with the exegesis of the Old Testament, the object of this New Testament interpretation was to demonstrate the agreement between the doctrine of Jesus and the Apostles on the one hand, and the ecclesiastical rule of faith/truth on the other. Because the dominant thrust of Gnostic exegesis, as well with regard to the words of Jesus as to the sayings of Paul, was to take them in a highly spiritualized vein, the thrust of Irenaeus and Tertullian is rather for literal and 'plain' reading of the texts. In rebutting fanciful Gnostic interpretations, the two fathers often evince plain exegetical common sense, and the modern exegete may on occasion feel there is little difference between their way of reasoning and his/her own.[37]

In one respect the New Testament exegesis of these fathers is strikingly similar to their treatment of the Old Testament: they only treat single questions and single controversial texts. They never write a commentary on any New Testament book – as far as we know. Neither do Hippolytus, Cyprian, Novatian, with the same proviso.

We only mention this to bring out the almost complete contrast, and the feeling one has of entering a completely different world, when one turns to the vast exegetical corpus of Origen of Alexandria – the subject of our next section.

Scripture as platonic allegory: the Alexandrian tradition[38]

In Hellenism in general, there was a literary canon which was basic to all education and which played the role of a 'scripture' common to all: Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. With this almost sacred canon as text, children in elementary school learnt their grammar, and in more advanced studies learnt the rules of rhetoric and allegorical interpretation. The necessity and the justification of interpreting Homer allegorically had to do with the theories of the leading school of philosophy at the time: the Middle Platonists. Plato had rejected the myths of Homer altogether; they told stories completely unworthy of the gods, and were removed by two steps of imitation from the divine reality they purported to portray. Instead, the 'theology' of the ideal republic should always be true to the nature of the divine reality (*Republic* 379A). This complete rejection of Homer was not accepted by the rival Stoic philosophy; instead, the Stoic philosophers 'saved' Homer by regarding him as a divinely inspired author who had dressed 'true' (or 'natural') theology in allegorical garb. His texts were

philosophical enigmas to be unriddled by the interpreter. In Middle Platonism – itself an amalgam of the Platonic and Stoic traditions – this approach to the Homeric myths was developed further, and through the influence of the dominant Middle Platonic school this was made part of the common curriculum and common learning in the more advanced levels of classical education.[39]

Speaking of the Jewish and Christian adoption of this kind of literary and scholarly culture, we are by far best informed with regard to Alexandria. Here we meet a Jewish Middle Platonist, Philo, who adopts the allegorical exegesis of the Middle Platonic school, but applies it to the Torah of Moses.[40] Here we meet two Christian Middle Platonists, Clement and Origen, who in turn adopt large quantities of the allegorical exegesis of Philo, but then also develop their own Christian variety along the same hermeneutical lines. It all results in something qualitatively new in the history of Christian biblical interpretation.

For the sake of brevity, we shall concentrate on Origen in the following presentation of the Alexandrian approach (see Chapter 47 of this volume for a profile of Origen). He was the one who was to influence ecclesiastical interpretation of the Bible in the east and west for a very long time.[41]

Basic to the Platonic worldview was the conviction that the invisible world of intelligible ideas is more real than the visible world of sensible objects, and that the latter contains images, copies, of the former. The contrast of the visible versus the invisible world is so to speak found on a 'vertical' scale of value: the timeless hierarchy of different levels of being.

In early Christian writings we also find a similar contrast between what is seen and what is not seen, and the latter usually ranges over the former. But the reason for not being seen is partly different: the most valuable things are not seen *yet*, but will be exposed to sight in the end-time. The scale of value is so to speak horizontal, oriented along the time axis. The unseen things are the eschatological realities not yet revealed.

The contrast to the Platonic scheme is not absolute: in the here and now the eschatological things are so to speak stored in heaven, they are 'above'. But they are not to remain timelessly there, and one is not to bring oneself near to them by making a heavenly ascent of the intellect, as in Plato. God will bring heavenly things to earth in the end-time. Thus the Epistle to the Hebrews is more 'biblical' than Platonic when it states that 'faith is the assurance of things *hoped for*; the conviction of *things not [yet] seen* (11:1)'.

In Origen, this 'horizontal' or eschatological dimension of the invisible world is by no means absent. He shares a lot of the typological and prophetical exegesis of the Old Testament we have found in his predecessors.[42] But at the same time it is true that in Origen the 'vertical' dimension of the Platonic worldview tends to take first place in his theology as well as in his exegesis. This is clearly to be seen in his hermeneutical treatise on the principles of Christian exegesis in *On First Principles*, Book 4, as well as in his own exegetical practice in his innumerable commentaries and homilies.

One random example may illustrate the main points: In his homilies on Genesis, Origen comes to Gen. 26:15–33 on the numerous wells cleared by Isaac.[43] They had been dug in the days of Abraham, but the Philistines had filled them with earth; Isaac and his servants now clear them of the earth and find they still contain water. The deeper meaning of this, Origen explains, is that in the days of old the servants of Abraham, that is Moses and the other biblical authors, had dug the deep and water-producing wells of scriptural revelation. In order, however, to drink of this water, one has to read the scriptures spiritually. This the Philistines, that is, the Jewish scribes and Pharisees, did not. Neither did they allow others to do so: they hated the spiritual water of scripture and put earth in the wells. They 'put an earthly and fleshly interpretation on the Law and close up the spiritual and mystical interpretation so that neither do they themselves drink nor do they permit others to drink'. But Isaac, that is Christ, clears the wells; and not only Isaac himself – his servants the Apostles also. And they not only clear the old wells; they dig new ones: the New Testament books. These wells also the Jews try to fill with earth, i.e. interpret in a fleshly way.

> But also each of us who serves the word of God digs wells and seeks 'living water', from which he may renew his hearers. If, therefore, I too shall begin to discuss the words of the ancients and to seek in them a spiritual meaning, if I shall have attempted to remove the veil of the Law and to show that the things which have been written are allegorical, I am, indeed, digging wells. But immediately the friends of the letter will stir up malicious charges against me and will lie in ambush for me.
>
> *(*Homilies on Genesis *13)*[44]

Here we encounter many of Origen's basic exegetical principles. First, there is a prophetical dimension to the Old Testament text: Isaac and the events experienced by him point forward to Christ and his disciples. In fact, Origen is a master of this kind of typological interpretation. He takes Old Testament events, persons or institutions to prefigure Christ or the Church; and events in the life of Christ or the Church to prefigure the eschatological events; often one and the same event is seen to have analogies on all the four levels: Old Testament prefiguration; life of Jesus; life of the Church; eschatological realization.

But pointing out these correspondences is only the first step in Origen's exegesis; it is not his final aim. Once the correspondence is established, it turns out that basically *the same lesson* is to be learnt from the Old Testament story and its New Testament counterpart: that lesson is the superiority of spiritual, allegorical exegesis of scriptural stories, because only this exegesis brings out the spiritual lessons that help the soul in its ethical and mystical ascent towards God. This spiritual, allegorical exegesis is valid for texts from both Testaments indiscriminately. This second step of allegorical interpretation – 'digging the well' – is 'vertically' oriented, it is part of a spiritual ascension to heavenly realms.[45] It is not oriented along the time-line, it is not of the prophecy-fulfilment type, it does not discriminate between predictive texts in the Old Testament and fulfilment reports in the New.

The literal, historical meaning of the biblical text, the story it is *about*, corresponds to the visible realities in the Platonic worldview. The spiritual meaning of the text corresponds to the Platonic invisible world of intelligibles, the world of ideas. But how does Origen know that the biblical texts in both Testaments are to be interpreted in this double way, literally and allegorically? He tries to substantiate this with biblical texts which – when allegorically interpreted – seem to support such an idea. But his basic argument is this: God has placed in scripture some texts which are clearly 'unworthy of God' or simply illogical when taken literally. They have an allegorical sense *only*. The necessity of allegorical exegesis in these cases is a proof that allegorical exegesis is legitimate for each and every text of scripture.

Origen is plainly aware that in this argument he is making the same case as the allegorists of Homer. They, too, saw the need for allegorical interpretation in the embarrassing fact that, taken literally, the Homeric poems contained very much that was 'unworthy of God'. And it is interesting that, like the Homeric allegorists, Origen is aware that this way of interpreting texts is by no means uncontroversial.[46] There are those who reject allegorical exegesis altogether. Origen calls them 'carnal', 'simple-minded' and 'Jewish', and insinuates time and again – as in our example – that the masters and instigators of carnal exegesis are the Jews. Christian literalists are, perhaps without knowing it, making common cause with the Jews.[47]

Origen has, in the example we have been studying, a revealing aside which shows that he is fully aware of the Stoic-Platonic origins of his allegorical method:

> If anyone who has a secular education should now hear me preaching, he is perhaps saying: 'The things you are saying belong to us, and is the learning of our science. This very eloquence with which you discuss and teach is ours'. And, like some Philistine, he stirs up quarrels with me saying: 'You dug a well in my soil'.[48]

It is relevant to notice that in the older Christian exegetes of the 'proof from prophecy' tradition, we encounter no similar awareness that their *method* was controversial, or of foreign origin. Justin has no quarrel with Trypho about his interpretative techniques, only about his exegetical results. Origen, on the other hand, has frequent apologetic remarks on his method. He is painfully aware that it is not uncontested. In Justin's days, Christian exegesis was, culturally speaking, of a 'normal' Jewish type, and therefore uncontroversial with regard to its techniques. In Origen's days, Philo's allegorism had long been extinct among the Jews Origen knew, and they and some Christians accused him of interpreting scripture with a pagan method developed for interpreting pagan myths – an accusation also made by pagans themselves, as in the above quotation.

Finally, we learn from the example of Isaac's wells and their allegorical import that Origen's technique allows for continuous commentary on the scriptural texts as a whole, book by book, verse by verse. Origen is the first ecclesiastical writer, as far as the evidence goes, to write complete commentaries on biblical books, and as we have seen already his basic hermeneutical principle would make him write the same sort of commentaries on the books of both Testaments.[49] The aim of Origen's commentaries was to bring out the spiritual sense that each and every phrase of scripture, Old and New Testament, contained.

It remains to be added that Origen, as he himself was aware (as noted above), was the first Christian exegete to employ the full arsenal of antique scholarship in the field of interpretation. He carefully took all the steps required of a professional interpreter: establishing the original text, analysing the *realia* of the text, explaining the names of places and persons, analysing the figures of speech and the rhetorical patterns in the text, etc.[50] This careful attention to the literal meaning, the *historia* of the text, its 'flesh', was not in contradiction with Origen's search for the spiritual meaning: if the concrete 'flesh' is an image of heavenly realities, each and every detail in the image is significant.

In all this Origen set a new standard of Christian biblical scholarship, and through his enormous output of commentaries and homilies left a legacy which more or less all Christian interpreters of the Bible after him interacted with, in some way or other.[51] Origen marks a high point in the field of scholarship, a high point in spiritual reading of the Bible, and also a high point in 'Hellenizing' the Christian approach to the Bible. As we have seen, the latter fact made him and his exegesis somewhat controversial already during his lifetime, and it was to remain so for a long time. But even those who opposed him in no uncertain terms, remained deeply indebted to him in their own exegetical practice, even if they tried to conceal the fact.

We see this most clearly in the greatest biblical scholar of the west, Jerome (who is profiled in Chapter 56 of this volume).[52] His history with regard to Origen was dramatic: from enthusiastic admiration in his early years to bitter animosity in his later. But even in his later years, Origen remained his (often unrecognized) mentor and tutor, in questions of textual criticism as well as exegesis.[53] When Jerome sides with Origen's opponents in later Greek exegesis – the Antiochenes (see next section) – he nevertheless incorporates many of Origen's ideas on the 'spiritual' meaning of the texts, as in his Jeremiah commentary (his last work). And when Jerome boasts of knowledge he has got from his 'Hebrew' mentor, it is sometimes really Origen he is quoting, or rather Origen's report of what *he* had learnt from his Hebrew mentor!

Apart from Jerome, Ambrose (profiled in Chapter 57 of this volume) and Hilary are the main channels of Origenistic allegorism in the west.[54]

Allegory or *theoria?* The Antiochene school[55]

As we have seen already, allegorical exegesis in general, and Origen's in particular, was by no means uncontested in its own time. The most well-known ecclesiastical opposition to Origen is not the 'simple ones' he complains about himself, but a whole group of highly skilled exegetes of the late fourth and early fifth centuries, who all had their education in Syrian Antioch. The following are reckoned as the first members of this school: Diodore of Tarsus; Theodore of Mopsuestia;

John Chrysostom (profiled in Chapter 54 of this volume); and Theodoret of Cyrrhus (its later members had to move east, and continued their work in Edessa and further east).

Diodore of Tarsus can to some extent to be regarded as the founder of the Antiochene approach. Most of his writings are lost (he was later branded a heretic); but an interesting preface from his commentary on the Psalms has come down to us, and it is from this preface we are going to present some of the points made by the Antiochenes.

Diodore is openly hostile towards what he calls 'allegory':

> Those who pretend to 'improve' scripture and who are wise in their own conceit have introduced allegory because they are careless about the historical substance, or they simply abuse it. They follow not the apostle's intention [in Gal 4:28 when he uses the term allegory] but their own vain imagination, forcing the reader to take one thing for another [= Diodore's definition of allegory]. Thus they read 'demon' for abyss, 'devil' for dragon, and so on. I stop here so that I will not be compelled to talk foolishly myself in order to refute foolishness.[56]

Many scholars have felt compelled to take this at face value and to conclude that the Antiochenes rejected allegory altogether, and instead stuck to the literal meaning of the text, the *historia*. But Diodore himself speaks about a 'higher' meaning to be discerned through and above the literal; he calls it *theoria*. Some scholars have tried to identify this Antiochene *theoria* with the typological exegesis of the older 'proof from prophecy' tradition, so that *theoria* could be translated typology.[57] But this seems not to be a precise description of the intention of the 'theoretical' approach advocated by the Antiochenes. Diodore is not thinking in the terms of prediction-fulfilment; he is rather thinking in the following terms: the Psalms were worded by their authors in such a way that in their original setting some of their phrases had to be taken figuratively, as metaphors, because they contained a 'surplus' of meaning in that situation. But later in salvation history, the Psalms can be shown not only to remain relevant in new situations, but even to become *more* relevant, so that what was figurative in their original setting, can be taken quite literally in the New Testament setting. With other texts, much the same is true. A figurative reading of the Cain and Abel story can be shown to be very relevant for the Synagogue/Church conflict. But this higher sense, the *theoria*, should never be allowed to *replace* the literal *historia* of the text: in that case allegory would result. Allegory discards *historia* altogether.

'Despite Theodore [of Mopsuestia's] ingenious effort to dissociate *theoria* from allegory, the difference is not as clear as one might wish' (Froehlich 1984: 22). This is no doubt true; Frances Young has tried to distinguish between the Alexandrine and the Antiochene approach partly by pointing to different Hellenistic backgrounds, partly by emphasizing subtle differences of approach resulting from this. She thinks that the Alexandrines, Origen in particular, were heavily dependent upon the *philosophical* kind of allegory. One of its characteristics was a close attention to crucial *concepts* in the text; these key concepts were the points of departure for the allegorical interpretation, which often payed little attention to the whole context or body of the text. It was inattentive to what Young calls the *iconic* qualities of the text or the narrative as a whole. The Antiochenes were less philosophical, more *rhetorical* in their approach; they had more feeling for the text as narrative, and for the narrative pattern as image of higher truths.

Augustine's programme for the formation of an interpreter[58]

Augustine, who is profiled in Chapter 58 of this volume, wrote a whole book, *On Christian Teaching* (*De doctrina Christiana*), on the noble art of scriptural interpretation and homiletical presentation.[59] The book is remarkable in more than one respect, not least because it outlines a programme for interpreters of the Bible that Augustine himself was not able to follow. In this book one of the basic

requirements for the biblical interpreter is knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. Augustine's Greek was poor and he knew no Hebrew (but some Punic, another Semitic language).

In *De doctrina Christiana* one can easily discern two formative influences on Augustine as a biblical interpreter: his rhetorical education and the Origenistic tradition of spiritualistic allegorism transmitted to him mainly through Ambrose. It should perhaps be emphasized that these influences were of a different nature. His schooling in rhetoric in no way helped him with regard to a sympathetic understanding of the Old Testament; rather on the contrary, as he tells us in his *Confessions*. It was not until Ambrose in his sermons unlocked the secrets of the Old Testament through his 'spiritual' (we would call it Origenistic) interpretations, that Augustine was able to read this part of the Bible as divine instruction 'worthy of God':

> Ambrose's ideas had already begun to appear to me defensible; and the Catholic faith, for which I supposed that nothing could be said against the onslaught of the Manicheans, I now realized could be maintained without presumption. This was especially clear after I had heard one or two parts of the Old Testament explained allegorically – whereas before this, when I had interpreted them literally, they had 'killed' me spiritually. However, when many of these passages in those books were expounded to me thus, I came to blame my own despair for having believed that no reply could be given to those who hated and scoffed at the Law and the Prophets . . . I listened with delight to Ambrose, in his sermons to the people, often recommending this text most diligently as a rule: 'The letter kills, but the spirit gives life' [2 Cor. 3:6], while at the same time he drew aside the mystic veil and opened to view the spiritual meaning of what seemed to teach perverse doctrine if it were taken according to the letter . . . As to those passages in the Scripture which had heretofore appeared incongruous and offensive to me, now that I had heard several of them expounded reasonably, I could see that they were to be resolved by the mysteries of spiritual interpretation.
>
> *(*Confessions *5.14.24; 6.5.6,8)*[60]

This distinction between a 'literal' and a 'spiritual' or 'figurative' or 'allegorical' sense of scripture was to remain fundamental in Augustine's hermeneutic the rest of his life, and although its main field of application was the Old Testament, he could also freely allegorize gospel narratives in his sermons. But at the same time Augustine remained a *rhetor*, and the ideal of the *rhetor* was clarity of expression, not enigmatic and obscure statements. Therefore we find him stating in *De doctrina Christiana* that the enigmatic style of the sacred authors of scripture is not to be emulated by the Christian homilist or teacher:

> [The biblical authors] have uttered some passages with a beneficial and salutary obscurity, to exercise and, in a sense, to polish the minds of their readers, to break down aversions and spur on the zeal of those who are anxious to learn, as well as to conceal the meaning from the minds of the wicked . . . Their interpreters [on the other hand] . . . should not speak with a similar authority, as if they are proposing themselves for interpretation, but in all their words their first and greatest endeavor should be to make themselves understood as much as possible by clearness of style.
>
> *(*De doctrina Christiana *4.8.22)*[61]

In general, one may observe in *De doctrina Christiana* how the *rhetor*, so to speak, keeps the allegorist within bounds, and never allows a neglect of the literal meaning of the biblical text. Here Augustine recommends a series of techniques and auxiliary sciences, useful for establishing the authentic text among variant readings, discerning cultural and linguistic peculiarities in the text, deciphering foreign idioms, recognizing unfamiliar *realia* in the text, etc. For this purpose, Augustine effectively proposes

a Christian programme of education that would later materialize in the medieval education in the 'liberal arts': a preparatory schooling for the study proper, the study of scripture.

We should probably also hear the *rhetor* speaking when Augustine in *De doctrina Christiana* is very concerned to establish safe criteria for valid and invalid figurative interpretations. His fundamental criterion is a theological one: all scripture aims at strengthening the love of God and the love of neighbour; this is the final and ultimate criterion for all scriptural exegesis. Texts which cannot be seen to achieve this goal when taken literally, must be allegorized. But one should beware of judging biblical narratives too rashly in this regard. Some actions by the biblical persons which may seem immoral or offensive at first sight, were actually justified and right in their own time and circumstances.

This vacillation between apology for the literal sense of scripture, and a willingness to 'save' objectionable passages by allegorical exegesis, often gives Augustine's exegetical endeavour an experimental, open-ended, unfinished character – more so than in his unrecognized mentor Origen. Augustine was always willing to reconsider earlier interpretations, to try again, and to conclude with unanswered questions (as often in his several works on Genesis).[62]

While finishing the *De doctrina Christiana* in his later years, Augustine had come across the hermeneutical treatise of Tyconius, a former Donatist, on how to interpret scripture. Tyconius formulated seven rules, which Augustine found helpful in establishing further criteria for legitimate spiritual exegesis. One of the basic principles of Tyconius' rules, which also corresponded with Augustine's own practice, was to refer scriptural sayings either to Christ as head of his body, or to the Church as his body. Scripture itself did not necessarily make this distinction explicit, for example in many of the Psalms, where the 'I' of the Psalm could be either. If the Psalm's I is confessing sin, it is the Church speaking; if the I is speaking in a divine capacity, it is Christ.

It remains to add a final note on Augustine the *rhetor* in *De doctrina Christiana*. On one point his distinction between the intended obscurity of scripture and the intended clarity of the interpreter and preacher breaks down. Scripture after all does contain examples of eloquence that are to be emulated by the Christian teacher-preacher. Apart from a passage in Amos – exceptional in a prophet for its clarity! – it is above all the Pauline letters Augustine has in mind. Augustine thinks that Paul was probably not an educated orator, but he was a 'natural' one, and natural oratory is the best. The rhetorical handbooks, in fact, only teach what they have learnt from studying natural eloquence. Paul is one of those from whom natural eloquence may be learnt, full as he is of divine wisdom and divine passion.

One perceives through this that Paul's letters in many ways were a special case within scripture for Augustine – and not only for him. When we observe Origen interpret Paul, and John Chrysostom interpret Paul, we see skilled rhetoricians interpret texts that lend themselves easily to precisely this kind of interpretation. Here Platonic allegorization often recedes or disappears altogether, and instead a rhetorical analysis of the text is presented that almost allows the modern, also rhetorically schooled exegete, to have the feeling he or she is reading an ancient colleague, a worthy discussion partner.[63]

Augustine never states it, but one could perhaps 'explain' Paul's exception to the rule of scripture's general enigmatic and non-rhetorical quality, by saying that in his letters Paul is primarily not an *author* of scripture, but an *interpreter* of scripture. Or perhaps, he is both. Therefore he *should* display that clarity and eloquence Augustine demands from the ordinary expositor and teacher of scripture.

Be that as it may. Our last remarks on Paul in the biblical exegesis of the Old Church, may serve as a sobering reminder that when we often treat 'scripture' more or less as one whole of a uniform nature, and therefore also the big questions of interpretative principles as questions valid for the whole of scripture, we are guilty of a simplification. A more nuanced picture would result if we treated the different categories and genres of biblical books separately. That would, of course, require more space than has been at our disposal here.

Conclusion

There was a distinctively Christian interpretation of the Jewish scriptures (called by Christians *The Old Testament*). Its distinctiveness had to do, inevitably, with the Christological 'key' early Christians applied to the old scriptures. From a methodological point of view, however, the earliest Christian exegesis was hardly much different from that of other Jewish 'schools' at the time. It was Jewish and Hellenistic at the same time, like that of the other schools.

With Origen as the watershed figure, Christian interpretation of the Bible was acculturated into a wider, more general setting in the early third century. The Bible of two Testaments was to replace the Homeric canon of Hellenistic culture; interpreted along the same allegorical lines as the rival canon of Homer. The project was begun, based primarily on the Law as sacred text, by Philo the Jew in the early first century CE, and brought to its mature completion by Origen in the third.

After Origen, Christian scholars of the Bible faced the challenge of digesting Origen's new approach and daring interpretations, at the same time preserving the valuable heritage of the older 'testimony' approach, balancing or integrating the two, or creating new syntheses. In all of this, Christian interpretation of the Bible was 'contextualized' to a remarkable degree, as we have tried to show.

Notes

1 For comprehensive and succinct surveys of biblical interpretation in the period 70–430 CE, see, for example, Hanson 1970; Schäfer 1980: 25–60; Grant and Tracy 1984: 28–82; Froehlich 1984: 1–29; Horbury 1988; Reventlow 1990: 50–201; Simonetti 1994: 1–109; Young 1997: 285–299.
2 See the comprehensive treatment in Patte 1975.
3 See, e.g. Schäfer 2009, 2014.
4 See especially the fundamental study of Daube 1949.
5 Attributed to Rabbi Levi (*c.* 300 CE) in *Pesikta* 49B and *Midrash Samuel* 45B; to Rabbi Isaac (also *c.* 300) in *Midrash Kohelet* 9B; cf. Billerbeck I, 69f.
6 For two incisive studies of this principle at work in the New Testament, see Goppelt 1939 and Bruce 1968.
7 Brewer 1992 found no undisputable example of this *haggadic* exegesis in the pre-70 rabbinic material, but recognized its presence in Qumran and Philo. One could add that it is also evidenced in the New Testament.
8 For an updated bibliography on the most important studies, see Hübner 1996: 332f.
9 *Tosephta Sukka* 3:11ff, cf. Billerbeck 1926 III: 406f for more rabbinic parallels. The same *haggada* seems to be known to the author of *Biblical Antiquities* (10.7), in the period between the two Jewish wars (70–132 CE). In identifying the rock with Christ, Paul may presuppose a Jewish tradition identifying the rock with God's Wisdom.
10 Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* [*Against Heresies*] 5.36.3; ANF translation vol. I: 567.
11 On this rabbinic debate, see the excellent excursus of Paul Billerbeck 'Diese Welt, die Tage des Messias und die zukünftige Welt' ['This world, the days of the Messiah and the future world'], in Billerbeck IV: 799–976.
12 *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin* 99A (my translation).
13 See Patte 1975: 299–308; Maier 1996: 126–129.
14 Von Ungern-Sternberg, 1913.
15 Von Ungern-Sternberg differentiated the traditional 'proof from the scriptures' into 'proof of Christ' and 'proof of gospel' in perfect agreement with Luke 24:46–47.
16 For more on this connection between scriptural proof and emerging creed, see Skarsaune 1987b.
17 For detailed argument, see Skarsaune 1987a: 260–262.
18 See Von Ungern-Sternberg 1913: 27–144, 169–220; Skarsaune 1996a: 421–442.
19 See De Margerie 1980: 165–187; Van Rompay 1996: 619–622 (on Aphrahat) and 622–628 (on Ephrem).
20 See Skarsaune 1990: 210f.
21 They also evince another characteristic of Jewish scribal culture: the 'free' or allusive quotation of scripture. Cf. Skarsaune 1990: 210f; Stanley 1997.
22 See Skarsaune 1990 for a fuller treatment of this theme.
23 See Skarsaune 1996a: 418–421, with references to further literature on the testimony book hypothesis.
24 My own translation.
25 Translation according to Hall 1979: 17–19.

26 Young 1997: 144–152, 184, 210–11.
27 For a more detailed treatment of the argument in this and the foregoing paragraphs, see Skarsaune 1996a: 389–442.
28 On Hippolytus' exegesis in general, cf. Simonetti 1994: 26–31; on his 'extension' of the 'testimony' approach into complete commentary, cf. also Daniélou 1973: 257–271; Skarsaune 1996a: 434–437.
29 Translation according to Falls 1965: 66f.
30 Especially see the fine study of Droge 1989.
31 On Tertullian's Old Testament exegesis, see De Margerie 1983a: 23–64; Skarsaune 1996a: 429–434 (with further bibliography).
32 For reviews of Irenaeus' Old Testament exegesis, see De Margerie 1980: 64–84; Schäfer 1980: 32–35; Reventlow 1990: 150–170; Skarsaune 1996a: 422–429 (with further bibliography); Jourjon 1997.
33 Contrary to much current scholarly opinion, there is hardly any trace of anything approaching canonical status for the so-called Apocrypha in the first and second centuries CE. The thesis of a larger 'Alexandrian' canon taken over by the early Church has been successfully refuted by Sundberg 1964; see also Skarsaune 1996b. In the third century Origen discusses the status of some of the Apocrypha. From then onwards one can observe that several Greek fathers do not include the Apocrypha in their lists of canonical books, but often the same fathers sometimes quote them as scripture. In the west Augustine says that the 'learned' have a more narrow canon, while ecclesiastical tradition has a wider; Jerome confirms this in his own attitude. He basically advocates the Jewish canon, but has to yield to requests from Church members who want him to include the Apocrypha in his translation project. (See more on this in Sundberg 1964.)
34 On the biblical material in *1 Clement*, see Hagner 1973.
35 Among the Gnostics we even hear about a full-fledged commentary: Heracleon's on John (somewhat after 150 CE), which Origen quoted extensively to refute it in his own commentary on John.
36 See Pagels 1975.
37 Especially on Tertullian's exegesis, see Waszink 1979.
38 Comprehensive reviews of Clement's and Origen's exegesis: Daniélou 1973: 237–256, 273–288; De Margerie 1980: 95–136; Schäfer 1980: 40–44; Grant and Tracy 1984: 52–62; Reventlow 1990: 170–193; Simonetti 1994: 34–48; Carleton Paget 1996.
39 See Coulter 1976: 19–31; Dawson 1992: 23–72; Siegert 1996: 130–139; Procopé 1996.
40 The literature on Philo as biblical interpreter is vast; for three recent treatments with full bibliographies, see Dawson 1992: 73–126; Siegert 1996: 162–188; Borgen 1997.
41 On Origen and his exegesis, cf. the literature in note 38, and in addition Hanson 1959.
42 Cf. the excellent review of Origen's 'organisation of typology' in Daniélou 1973: 275–280.
43 An English translation is to be found in Heine 1982: 185–195.
44 Translation according to Heine 1982: 189.
45 In this way, being an exegete is more than exercising an interpretative competence, it is part of a spiritual life leading to salvation. See for this perspective on Origen, Martens 2012.
46 On rejection of allegory in secular Hellenism, see Dawson 1992: 52–72.
47 On the opponents of Origen as scriptural literalists, see Hällström 1984: 43–57.
48 See Hällström 1984: 189–190.
49 In this, he is very different from Hippolytus, the only known ecclesiastical writer before him to write commentaries on Old Testament books.
50 On Origen's enormous text-critical project, the so-called Hexapla, see, for example, Trigg 1983: 82–86. On Origen's 'philological' scholarship in general, see Neuschäfer 1987; Young 1997: 82–96.
51 The classic study of this is Von Harnack 1918/19.
52 On Jerome's exegesis, see the following surveys: Sparks 1970; Schäfer 1980: 48–50; De Margerie 1983b: 145–179; Simonetti 1994: 99–103; Kieffer 1996. See also the more extensive treatment in Brown 1992.
53 See Kelly 1975: 220ff, 290–294, 298–308, 316ff.
54 On these fathers, see De Margerie II 1983a: 65–143, and Jacob 1996.
55 For general reviews of the exegesis of the Antiochene school, see Kelly 1973: 75–78; De Margerie 1980: 188–240; Schäfer 1980: 44–48; Grant and Tracy 1984: 63–72; Simonetti 1994: 59–63; Hidal 1996 (with further bibliography).
56 Quoted from the translation in Froehlich 1984: 82–86; quotation 86.
57 So, to some extent, Kelly 1973: 75–78.
58 On Augustine as an interpreter, see Bonner 1970; De Margerie III (1983b); Wright 1996; Young 1997: 265–284.
59 On Augustine's principles of exegesis according to the *Doctrina*, see Teske 1995; Dawson 1995.
60 Translation according to Outler 1995: 111, 117–119.
61 According to the translation of Gavigan 1947: 187–188.

62 For details on this, see Wright 1996: 704–709.
63 In Gorday (1983) Origen, John Chrysostom and Augustine are brought in as interesting outsiders and counterpoints to the modern 'Romans debate', especially concerning the role of Romans 9–11 within Romans as a whole. It turns out that Origen is most in touch with the modern debate!

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PART VII

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34

EARLY CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE

The first five centuries

L. Michael White

By the time the early Christians began to build monumental churches during the reign of Constantine the Great (313–337 CE), there had been a recognizable, public religious architecture in the Graeco-Roman world for over a millennium. Yet, the Christians did not adopt a traditional Greek or Roman style of temple architecture for their churches. Instead, they adapted the basilica. Modeled after a standard type of audience hall used by municipal courts and imperial administrators, the basilica effectively became the norm and hence the rootstock for the evolution of all later types of Christian architecture down to modern times. To understand the forces of tradition and change at work in this religious arena is critical to understanding the development of early Christianity itself. There are important implications in terms of Christianity's social location, its liturgical evolution, and its self-understanding.

Because of this distinctive role in Christian history, it has been suggested that the basilica was a radical departure from the religious architecture of the pagan world, a symbol of the triumph of Christianity over its environment (MacDonald 1977: 12). Christianity's religious architecture, it is thus argued, avoided the sacralization of objects and places typical of pagan temples and shrines.[1] In reality, however, the story is more complex; the cultural disjunctures less clear. The evolution of a typically Christian architecture was a long process that reflected the appropriation of traditional Jewish as well as pagan forms and practices (De Blaauw 2007: 239–261). Local traditions and influences abound, especially in the earlier stages. Prior to the time of Constantine, there was no normative Christian architecture in any strict sense. One could not walk down the streets of Rome, Corinth, or Carthage and pick out a Christian church by its distinctive plan or façade. There was not yet an iconography of architectural planning that had become identifiably Christian. Features that seem familiar today, such as steeples and stained glass windows, were still a millennium away as symbolic markers of Christian religious architecture.

In the age of Constantine, then, Christianity developed its first normative public expression of religious architecture after nearly three centuries of social evolution. For this reason, the study of the origins and development of early Christian architecture is usually broken into two main chronological phases: that before the time of Constantine and that after. In examining this process, then, we shall take up the material as follows:

1 The architectural environment: public and private
   (a) 'Public' religion: temples in classical Greece and Rome
   (b) Domestic space and 'private' religion
   (c) Foreign religions and architectural adaptation

2 From 'houses' to church buildings: Paul to Constantine
   (a) The synagogue and Diaspora Judaism
   (b) The house church
   (c) The *domus ecclesiae* and architectural adaptation
   (d) The *aula ecclesiae*
3 The birth of the basilica: the fourth and fifth centuries
   (a) Constantine's building program
   (b) Local and regional variations
   (c) Other types of Christian architecture: martyria and baptisteries
   (d) The Christian landscape of late Roman cities

The architectural environment: public and private

For people living in the Hellenistic-Roman world the norms of religious architecture would have been well known and readily recognizable both in the public and private spheres. Nonetheless, there are some key differences between the religious environments of classical Greece and imperial Rome that must be noted.[2]

'Public' religion: temples in classical Greece and Rome

From the late archaic to the Hellenistic period (seventh to third centuries BCE) the center of religious life in a Greek city became the monumental podium temples associated with particular deities or mythic foundations. The interior *cella*, surrounded by one or more colonnades, housed the statue of the deity; it was tended by a coterie of professional priests often assisted by city magistrates, leading citizens, and other individuals. A cycle of festivals, processions, and sacrifices was managed by the priests and the city as part of its ritual calendar. As at Athens, the most important temples were often set up on the citadel of the city, called the *acropolis* (or 'upper city'). In some cases, however, the principal sanctuary might be otherwise set apart from the main city, as in the case of the temple of Ephesian Artemis, especially after the city was relocated in Hellenistic times. Other temples, smaller sanctuaries and shrines, and altars were spread about the areas of the *agora* (or 'marketplace') and other important or sacred localities, such as springs, civic boundaries, and the like. Religious architecture from great to small emulated the iconography of temples and was a part of the civic landscape.

In classical Greek religion, however, there were numerous other sanctuaries that were not exclusively associated with a single city. Often they were associated with places of awe and majesty or with important mythic events, as in the case of the oracular sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, the temple of Zeus at Olympia, the sacred precincts of Apollo at Delos, the sanctuary of Apphaia on Aegina, the temple complex of Poseidon and Athena at Cape Sounion, or the Telesterion or sanctuary of the mysteries at Eleusis. Some of these came to be closely linked at times with Athenian political control, yet they retained their mystique even after Athens' decline. Centuries later a host of traveling Romans—emperors and senators, Herod and Paul—still knew them as sacred places and favorite tourist destinations. From Hellenistic times, other important sanctuaries also developed, such as those associated with the hero and healing god Askleipios that grew up at Epidauros, Kos, and Pergamon. Then there were lesser shrines that dotted the landscape, such as Herms used to mark key locations, sacred groves, or the tomb of a local hero (called a Heröon). Finally, there were the shrines and religious appurtenances of the household itself. Thus, Greek religion had a continuity of expressions across the public and private spheres that integrated the cultural ideals of Greek society.

The monumental temples of ancient Rome were influenced by both Etruscan and Greek architectural traditions (cf. Edlund-Berry 1988). By the second century BCE Rome had developed its own norms of city planning and sacred architecture. A Roman temple complex (literally a sacred precinct) centered

on a podium temple, but traditionally without peripteral colonnades. Elevated on a podium fronted by several steps, the cella enclosed the sides of the podium with a colonnade along the façade only. Round temples with colonnades were also used, and gradually, Greek temple styles with peripteral colonnade became more prominent in Rome.

While temples and sanctuaries might be inside or outside the walls of a Roman city, the *pomerium* (or boundary) of the city also marked a sacred enclosure; in Roman cities, for example, burials were usually prohibited within the *pomerium*. Roman city planning was oriented around the forum, increasingly in imitation of Rome itself. By the age of Augustus, the forum was typically dominated by a temple of the Capitoline gods (Jupiter, Juno, Minerva), also called the *Capitolium*. The foundation and siting of a temple required the assent of religious officials (the *collegium pontificum*) and the senate (Stambaugh 1978, 1988). Temples for other deities were then located according to traditional functions and events. New temples, sanctuaries, and altars were introduced with regularity in the republican period and even more frequently during the empire.

In the Hellenistic and Roman world temples functioned as banks, social welfare agencies, places of political sanctuary, and the centers of public festivals and processions. The sacred precincts accommodated crowds of people on special holy days or when particular rituals and sacrifices—'liturgies' (*leitourgiai*) in Greek, 'offices' (*officia*) in Latin—were performed. Often major festivals functioned as civic banquets, and sacrifices were publically distributed as part of the festivities. Yet, a temple in the strict sense, as the house of a god (the *cella* in architectural terms), was not normally a place for public assembly or religious 'worship' in any modern sense. The order of procedures for acts of worship and devotion, whether for major festivals or for individual devotion, at most temples was carefully prescribed. In Greek religion there were few exceptions where a gathering of people was convened in a large hall as part of a religious ceremony. One such was the Greater Mysteries, the annual ritual of initiation celebrated at the Telesterion of Eleusis. Otherwise, most corporate religious activity of a public nature was conducted out of doors in processions and festival activities. A number of ancient Greek and Roman temples (such as the sanctuary of Demeter at Corinth or the sanctuaries of Askleipios) made provision for smaller groups to gather in dining rooms in the temple complex, but not in the temple-cella proper. On the other hand, both Greeks and Romans viewed the civic assembly (*ekklēsia* and *curia*, respectively)[3] as sacred gatherings, and their architecture reflected this sacralization.

Domestic space and 'private' religion

While the elements of such public and official religious activities and their architectural forms were monumental and distinctive in style, the continuum between public and private forms of religiosity was not clearly differentiated in the Hellenistic-Roman world. In contrast to modern cultural distinctions between public/civic and private/domestic, a number of recent archaeological and cultural studies have shown that many elements of domestic life were considered part of the public sphere (Laurence 1994, 1995, 1997; Wallace-Hadrill 1994, 1995). *Compita* (or 'crossroads' shrines) marked key sections of the city, including voting districts (the *vici*) or neighborhoods (Bakker 1994). Domestic religion and the household shrine (or *lararium*) stood at the intersection between these spheres of activity, especially where key social rituals (patronage, hospitality, and dining) were concerned (Orr 1978; Clark 1991; Foss 1997; Osiek and Balch 1997: 5–47; Wallace-Hadrill 1997; White 1998: 177–181).

Apart from the family, the most important social groupings in Roman cities were the guilds and clubs (Latin: *collegia* or *sodalicia*; Greek: *thiasoi*). Comprised of people in a common trade, veterans, ethnic enclaves, or funerary societies for the freeborn poor, they afforded social cohesion and networks of support for members of the group. Guilds and *collegia* participated in regular public festivals, often in some special capacity. Yet the majority of their religious activities were conducted in a non-public arena, usually in dinner gatherings for their members. Most had a patron deity or deities, frequently

with a special shrine or a private temple set aside within the society's headquarters (sometimes called a *schola*). Dining halls were another common feature. Their banquets were frequently accompanied by sacrifices and other acts of piety by the group or its individual members. Such communal gatherings could at times find their way into the precincts of the public temples, but most often kept to the more private confines of their own buildings.

In the Hellenistic world, these collegial halls typically resembled domestic architecture, as in the case of the 'Association of Merchants and Shippers from Berytus' who in the second century BCE established a headquarters in the important trade center of Delos. Based on the grandiose inscription from the peristyle of their building, their hall was known as the 'House of the Poseidoniasts from Berytus.' Their patron deity, Greek Poseidon, was an amalgamation with their local form of Ba'al from Syria. Architecturally the building resembles a house with a typical peristyle court and a large room for assembly. Instead of regular domestic quarters, however, it featured a separate room with altars and statues of the gods (Picard 1921; Bruneau 1970: 623–624).

From the Roman period we find analogous groups, such as the Tyrian merchants at Puteoli who maintained a collegial hall and sanctuary dedicated to their ancestral god (Ba'al of Serapta), whom they called by the Hellenized name Helios Seraptenos (Nock 1933: 66; White 1996–97: I. 32). At Ostia we find the *collegium* of the *Fabri Navales* (the Shipbuilders Guild), whose headquarters (III. 2.2) was located along the main street, the *Decumanus maximus*, a few blocks west of the Forum. The edifice (Figure 34.1 locus A) was installed in a lot previously occupied by private houses and a fullonica (or cleaning establishment). The rear areas of the complex were used for other activities and gatherings of the group (Meiggs 1973: 327; Hermansen 1981: 63).

Immediately across the street hall (see Figure 34.1 locus B) stood another collegial hall (IV. 5.15). Usually known as the 'School of Trajan' (*Schola Traiani*), it probably also belonged to the same Shipbuilders collegium or perhaps the 'Shipowners Association' (*Navicularíei*).[4] Their building similarly took over and renovated a large peristyle house dating from the early first century CE; the reconstruction dates to the late second century CE. In addition to offices, an imperial shrine, a large peristyle court with central fountain (a nymphaeum), and porticoes, the rear of the complex contained a large and richly decorated dining hall with an apsidal niche for a statue of Fortuna. For such groups, social interaction, especially banquets, were closely aligned with their religious activities.

Like the headquarters of the *Fabri Navales*, a number of these guild halls at Ostia clearly included small temples within their confines, even though the buildings themselves came from the realm of domestic architecture.[5] Some groups adopted explicitly religious designations such as the obscure group known only from inscriptions as 'The Order of the Guildbrothers who contributed funds for enlargement of the temple' (Meiggs 1973: 335; Hermansen 1981: 59, 241). Two further cases known from epigraphic remains reflect this continuum between public and private arenas of religious activity. One is the household of Pompeia Agripinilla which in *c.* 127 CE was organized as a cult of Dionysus; the nearly 500 members of her household were called 'initiates' (Greek: *mystai*) and were assigned hierarchically to ranks and offices within the 'cult.' Agripinilla, the *mater familias*, held the highest rank as priest and patron of the cult (White 1996–97: I. 45 with references). From Rome, another inscription refers to 'the Association which is in the house of Sergia Paullina' (*Collegium quod est in domu Sergiae Paullinae*, *CIL* 6.9148). In the former case the household is identical to the cult; in the latter, it appears that the *collegium* meets in the house of the patron, likely overlapping somewhat with the household but not entirely.[6]

Foreign religions and architectural adaptation

Beginning in Hellenistic times there was a growing trend for new religious groups to move into the urban environment alongside the traditional cults. These new groups came from the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East in the wake of Alexander's conquests and the subsequent centuries of Hellenistic rule. By the first century BCE these regions came under Roman rule, but by then the

Figure 34.1 Ostia: Regions III and IV along the Decumanus Maximus, city plan (White 1996–97: II. fig. 41)

pathways of migration and cultural interaction had been well worn. As with the shippers and merchants on Delos in the Hellenistic period and those at Puteoli and Ostia in the imperial age, many people were drawn by trade and migration to the large cities. With them they carried their cultural heritage and their religious traditions. Their collegial halls thus served both as commercial agencies and as religious and social centers.

Once out of the realm of the official cults associated with the state or the city, there was much more variety in religious activity and in its architectural forms. Dining and social functions were closely linked to religious activities. Houses might be turned into cult centers or collegial halls. A wealthy homeowner might also install his/her own private 'chapel' in honor of a favorite deity or as part of a small religious confraternity. For example, at Ephesos, a wealthy city official (*alytarch*) of the

early second century CE, named C. Flavius Furius Aptus owned a palatial house (*Hanghaus* 2) along the Embolos (or Processional Way). Off a peristyle court reached from a mosaic portico along the street, he installed a small apsidal shrine to Dionysus next to an opulent dining hall. It seems that these rooms were meant for formal entertaining of small elite groups (Wiplinger and Wlach 1995: 103–104).

Similarly, at Rome a group using the collegial title 'Association of the Treebearers' (*Collegium Dendrophororum*) met in an apsidal hall in the house of its patron, Manius Publicius Hilarus, who lived on the Caelian. Though located in a domestic setting, the hall was marked off by a formal inscription of dedication and invocation (*CIL* 6.641, 30973). It would appear that this was a private cultic association loosely tied to the cult of Magna Mater, but it maintained its own distinct social and religious functions apart from the public cult (White 1996–97: I. 46). Architectural adaptation and renovation was the order of the day, and such groups relied on the patronage of leading individuals.

It seems that many of the so-called 'mystery cults' made their way into the Hellenistic and Roman world by means of architectural adaptation and private patronage either before or alongside of establishing formal public temples of classical design. A common phenomenon, this practice was especially noteworthy in the case of the cults of the Egyptian gods, where communal dining was a

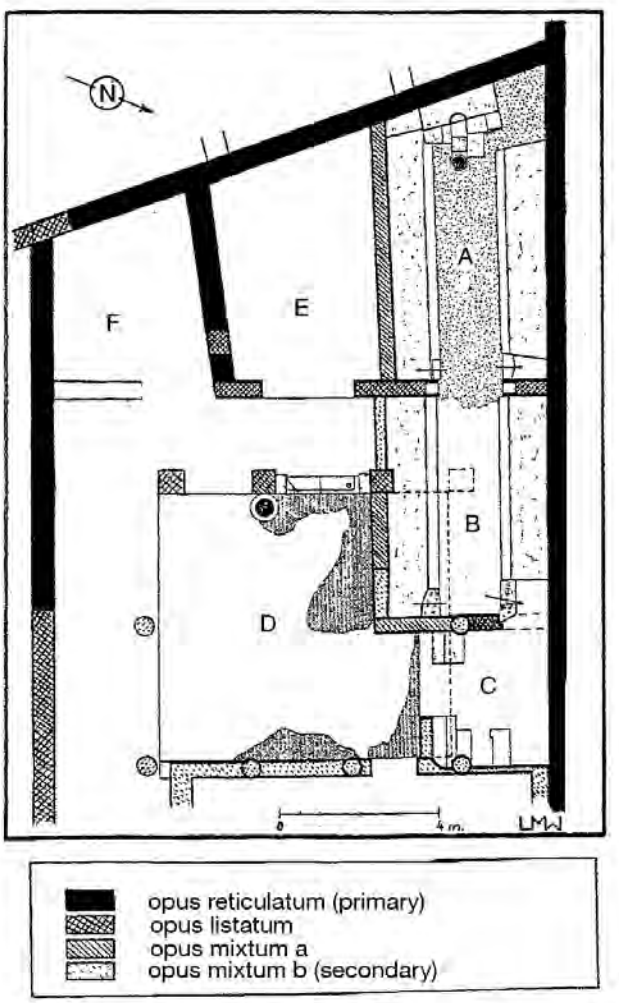

Figure 34.2 Plan of the Mithraeum of the Painted Walls in Ostia—'Mitreo delle pareti dipinte' (White 1996–97: II. fig. 42), adapted from Beccati, *Mitrei Ostia*

prominent feature (White 1996–97: I. 32–39, 43–46). The cult of Mithras, which became popular in the Roman world in the second century CE, developed a distinctive type of religious architecture for its sanctuaries, called mithraea (Figure 34.2).

There was a typical plan for most mithraea in the Roman world. In imitation of a cave, it was usually a long narrow hall with elevated benches along the two side walls and a central aisle leading to an altar platform at one end. On the side benches the members of the cult assembled, socialized, and ate communal dinners. The halls might be decorated with religious art and symbols, but the altar platform, usually decorated with mythic scenes of Mithras slaying the bull (or *tauroctony*) served as the focus of attention and cultic actions.

Despite these common features, the actual design and architecture of each mithraeum might be vastly different owing to the fact that most of them were quite small and usually constructed from or within some existing building (White 1996–97: I. 47–50). Very few ancient mithraea were *de novo* or purpose-built edifices for religious purposes; the vast majority (nearly 90 percent) of excavated mithraic buildings were created by renovation and architectural adaptation of houses, baths, cryptoportici, warehouses, vaulted storerooms, courtyards, and even nymphaea (White 1996–97: I.48; II. no. 87). All of the known mithraea from Rome and Ostia were renovated from existing buildings (see now White 2012). In some cases the renovations were minimal (White 1996–97: II. no. 79). In other cases they could be quite extensive, with lavish decorations and multiple stages of enlargement (White 1996–97: I.49–52; II. nos. 59, 79, 81, 89). For example, the 'Mithraeum of the Painted Walls' (Figure 34.2 and Figure 34.1 locus C) at Ostia (III.1.6) was constructed in two stages in the courtyard and a side room of a house (White 1996–97: II. no. 81). Similarly, at Rome, the mithraeum found beneath the apse of San Clemente (Figure 34.3 and Figure 34.12 below) had been installed in the second or third century in the cortile of a private house; before renovation the same space had been used as a nymphaeum (White 1996–97: II. no. 87).

What sets the mithraic cult apart architecturally from other traditional religions of the Hellenistic-Roman world is the lack of a formal temple architecture apart from these small sanctuaries. Still, they participated in public temple activities as part of daily life, even though their own cultic dining and social activities took place within the sanctuary. In this sense, it was more 'private' both in setting and in operations despite the fact that a limited iconography of architecture had evolved.

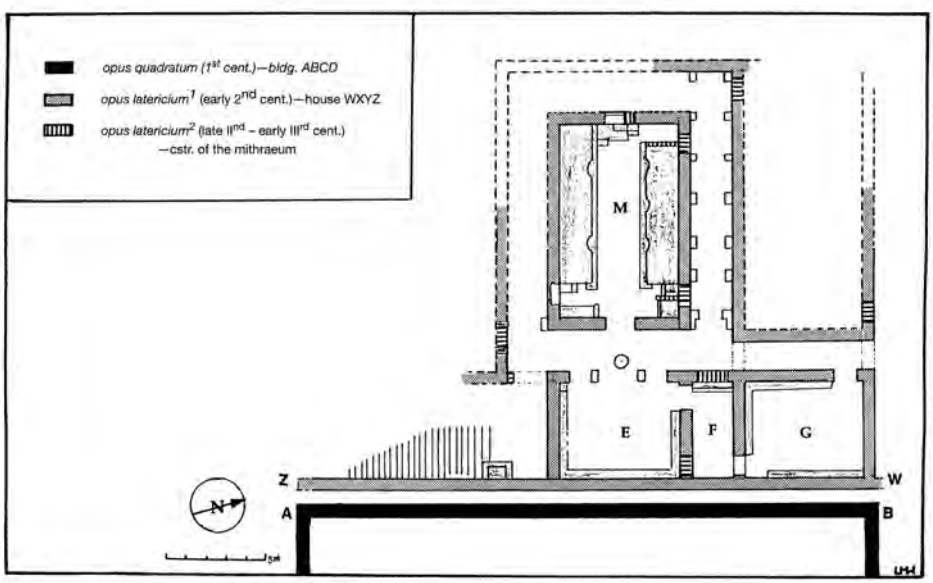

Figure 34.3 Plan of the San Clemente mithraeum, Rome (White 1996–97: II. fig. 44); after Guidobaldi

In some ways it was closer to a *collegium*, even though it was publically recognized as a religion by Roman standards. As with most other forms of religious architecture, public or private, the bulk of construction, renovation, and decoration fell to the private acts of devotion of individual members, and especially to the wealthy. They usually functioned as patrons and leaders within the cultic community (White 1996–97: I. 53–57).

From 'houses' to church buildings: Paul to Constantine

In its earliest stages the Christian movement was not a separate religion but a sect within first-century Judaism. As such it observed the rhythms of religious life in the same way as other Jews. In terms of architecture, therefore, the center of religious identity was the temple at Jerusalem. The temple was rebuilt and enlarged extensively under the Hasmoneans and even more under Herod the Great; Herodian construction continued from *c.* 20 BCE down to 62 CE, not long before the outbreak of the war that would see it finally destroyed in 70 CE. It was a center of sacrificial activity and national identity; it was an architectural showpiece set in an elevated position within the 'sacred' city, Zion. The area surrounding the Jewish temple (the outer courts, or 'Court of the Gentiles') was a gathering place for religious festivals and other public and commercial activities. Jewish men alone could approach the entrance to the building through the inner courts, but the temple proper, and especially its inner sanctum, was restricted to the priests alone. In this sense, it functioned much like other ancient temples. Despite the fact that no Jew would say that their God actually lived there, it was still conceived as the place where God's presence dwelt as a symbol of Israel's status as chosen nation.

According to the New Testament, the first followers of the Christian movement continued in traditional forms of Jewish piety, attending the temple, observing annual feasts and purity rules.[7] As such they initially had no need of other forms of religious architecture, especially since the movement was limited to a Jewish following in the Homeland (White 1996–97: I. 102–103). Like other Jewish sects, these earliest Christians also met in homes for private meals, fellowship, and prayer (Acts 2–5). The Pharisees were another Jewish group that used home-based fellowships as a locus for study and prayer alongside the normal religious functions of the temple.[8] Only after the temple was destroyed in 70 CE would the synagogue emerge as the new center of Jewish worship and identity.[9] A normative synagogue architecture and liturgy did not evolve until the fourth century CE as part of the consolidation of rabbinic Judaism. Consequently, it did not serve as the architectural model for the development of Christian architecture, the basilica in particular, as has sometimes been supposed.[10]

The synagogue and Diaspora Judaism

Early on synagogues were usually just called 'prayerhalls' (Greek: *proseuchai*). In the Homeland prior to 70 CE they are known from scant references of Josephus (*Jewish War* 2.285–9; *Jewish Antiquities* 19.200–305; *Life* 277–280) and early Christian writings (the Gospels and Acts); however, it is significant that all were authored well after the war. Only in Philo (*De vita Mosis* 2.215–6; *De legibus specialibus* 2.62) do we find securely dated pre-70 references, but these come from the Alexandrian Jewish community, not the Homeland (Grabbe 1995: 20–21). Thus, we should probably think in terms of several distinct trajectories or streams of synagogue development, each coming from a different social and cultural experience of Jewish life. In the Homeland, prayerhalls might serve as village councils or be associated with specific sectarian groups. In the Diaspora, they served as community centers where ethnic and religious identity blended in response to the minority environment.

Archaeological evidence for pre-70 synagogues is even more perplexing, since it now appears that the vast majority date to the centuries after the First Revolt; they occur either from the Galilee or from provisions for Diaspora Jews. Moreover, these cases arise only in the post-Hasmonean period, i.e., late first century BCE, or later (Flesher 1995: 30–34; Grabbe 1995: 21–23). By contrast, archaeological and epigraphic evidence points to the origins of Jewish prayerhalls in the second

and first centuries BCE in Ptolemaic Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean Diaspora (White 1987; Grabbe 1995: 18–19; Griffiths 1995). In other words, the synagogue originated in regions away from Judaea, where access to the temple was limited. In the Diaspora, it functioned as social as well as religious center, and there was neither a fixed liturgy nor architecture in the pre-70 period (White 1987; Kasher 1995).

When we look at the archaeological remains of Diaspora synagogues (Figure 34.4) we discover that all were adapted from previously existing buildings, usually over several phases of renovation and development (see Figure 34.9 later).

There are six such edifices known that date, at least in part, from the pre-Constantinian period. Listed in more or less chronological order for their earliest phases, they are: Delos (second/first century BCE), Dura-Europos and Priene (late second to third century CE), Stobi and Sardis (third/fourth centuries CE), Ostia (fourth century CE). Of these six, four were clearly renovated from existing private houses and one (Ostia) was likely some sort of insula complex. The complex was not built before the early third century CE, but was probably not renovated for use as a synagogue until the mid fourth century; it was renovated again in the late fifth century.[11] The Sardis synagogue, the largest known from antiquity (see also Figure 34.21 below), was renovated in at least three distinct phases from a municipal bath-gymnasium complex (Kraabel 1995; White 1996–97: I. 60–77, II. nos. 60, 66, 69, 70, 72, 83).

Both the archaeological and epigraphic record from these edifices attest to the significant role played by patrons, both men and women, in their growth and architectural development (Brooten 1982; White 1996–97: I. 77–93). In many ways, the use of space and the social organization of these communities most resemble that of other religious clubs or *collegia*, especially during the Roman period (White 1987, 1997; Richardson 1996). Three further points are worth noting in the architectural development of these edifices. First, as A. T. Kraabel (1981: 89) has noted, the form of these buildings and their adaptation was determined by local social and economic conditions more than by any architectural norms (cf. White 1996–97: I. 93–101). The Dura-Europos synagogue (Figures 34.5 and 34.6) is a good example since we can see its evolution from an ordinary house in the midst of a block of houses into a formal synagogue edifice in three distinct phases (White 1996–97: II. no. 60).

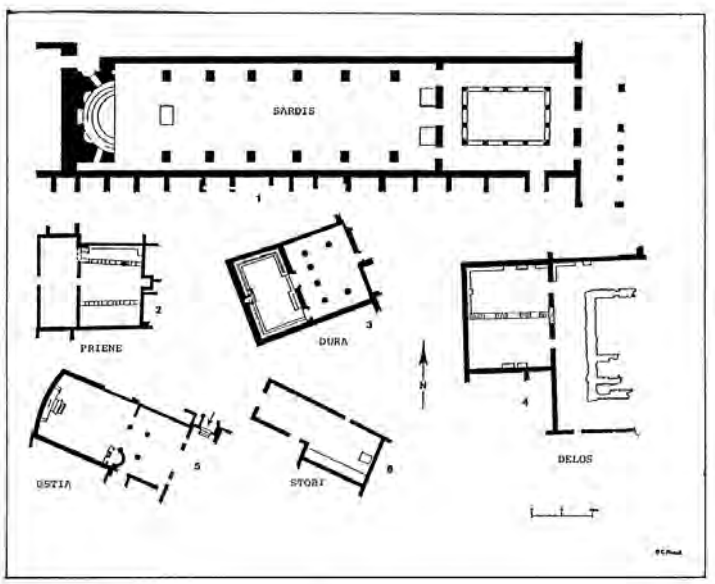

Figure 34.4 Synoptic plan of six Diaspora synagogues (White 1996–97: I. fig. 9)

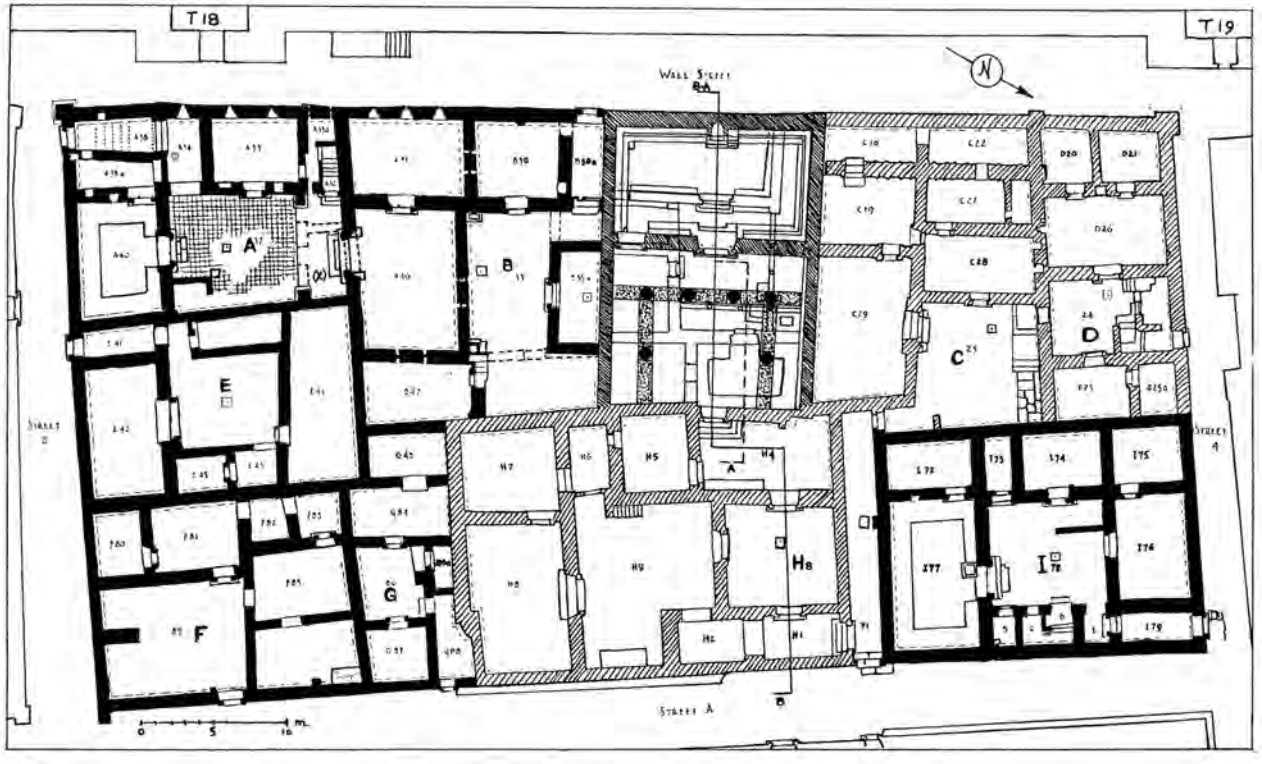

Figure 34.5 Plan of the block containing the synagogue in Dura-Europos (White 1996–97: II. fig. 28)

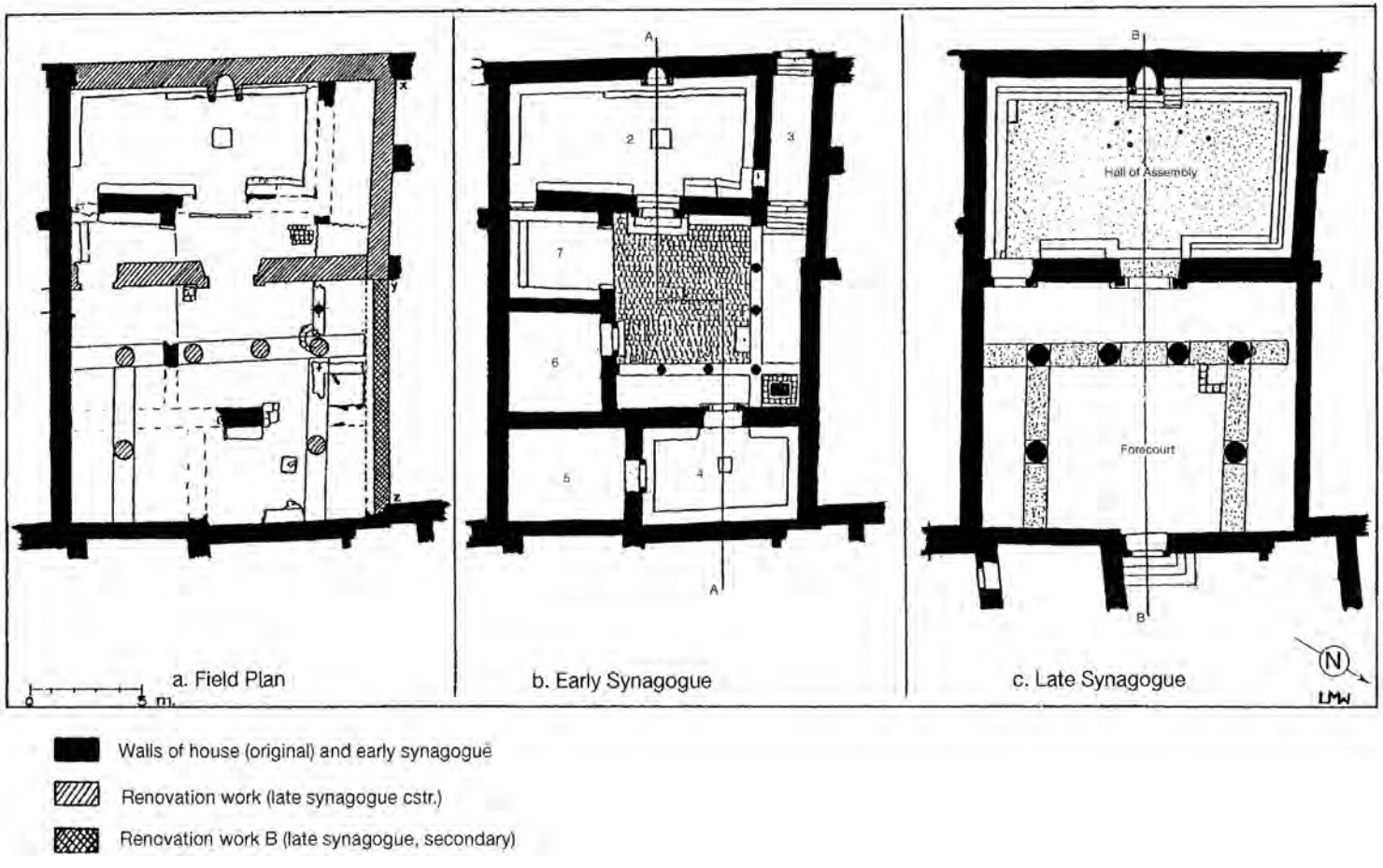

Figure 34.6 Plan of earlier and later phases of the synagogue in Dura-Europos (White 1996–97: II. fig. 29)

Second, over time, each building achieved more monumental scale and formal liturgical articulation. In particular, four of the six were outfitted with Torah shrines that stood as the focus of the assembly and worship arena (Figure 34.7). As an architectural edifice, the Torah Shrine does not appear before the very end of the second century CE, and becomes more prominent in the third to fifth centuries. It marks an articulation of sacred space in the synagogue and is closely associated with evolution and formalization of liturgy. Its development resulted from new religious functions and symbolism of the synagogue as sacred architecture that emerged after the destruction of the temple, correlated with the consolidation of the synagogue as religious institution in the rabbinic tradition (Hachlili 1989, 2013; Fine 1996; Hachlili and Merhav 1996; Rutgers 1996; White 1996–97: I. 93–101). Despite the absence of a fixed architectural form for the external building, by the end of this process, one finds broad or elongated halls with the Torah Shrine as focal point becoming the norm for the internal plan. In their final stages, the synagogues at Ostia and Sardis, both of which lasted well beyond the fifth century CE, reflect the influence of basilical architecture, probably from contemporaneous Christian usage. So also the emergence of the Christian basilica from the fourth century onward influenced later synagogue architecture in the Homeland as well as the Diaspora

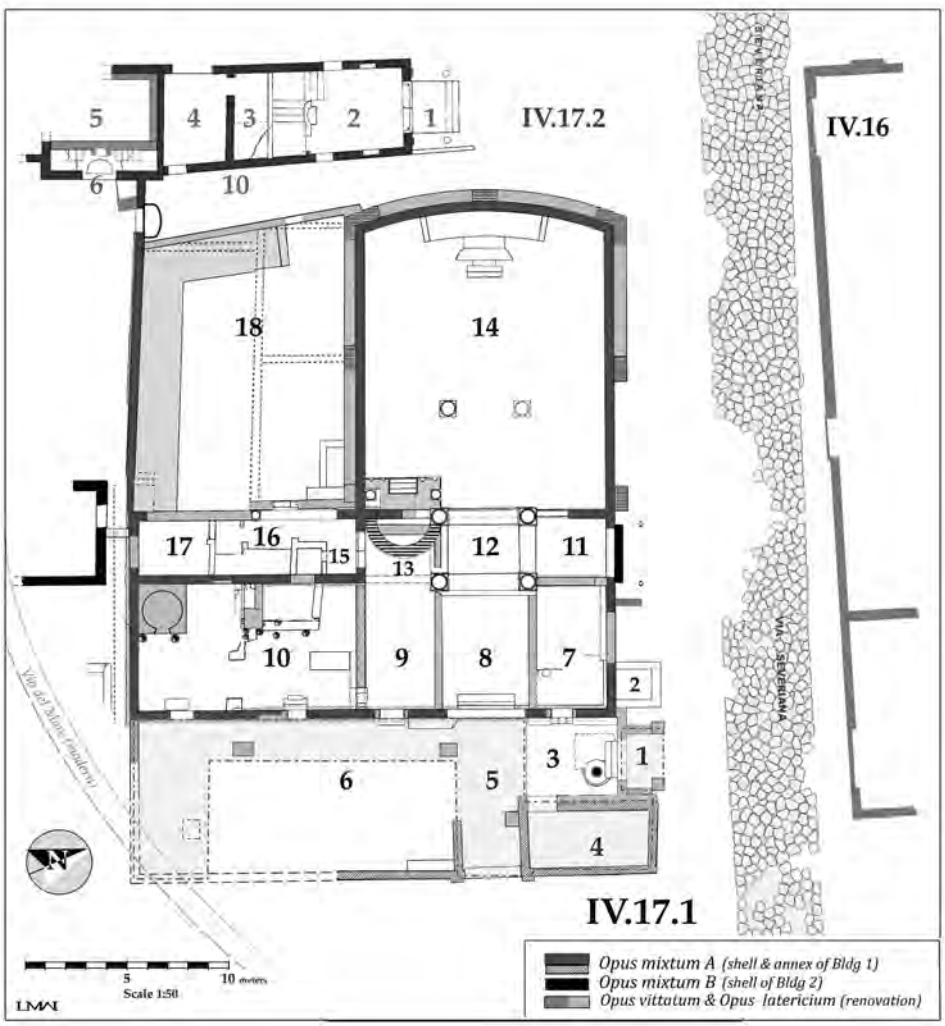

Figure 34.7 New composite plan of the synagogue at Ostia. Drawing by L. M. White

(Foerster 1995: 92–94; Habas 2000). In fact, it can now be shown that the Ostia Synagogue received its final renovation sometime after 450 CE, when its monumental apsidal Torah Shrine was installed. In this renovation, basilical elements came to dominate its architectural aesthetic, even though it is not a 'true' basilica in plan. It is thus quite significant to find a synagogue complex from the environs of Rome renovated in basilical form at this relatively late date; it continued in active operation well into the sixth century or later (see Figures 34.7 and 34.8).

Third, most of the Diaspora synagogues made provision for social functions, especially dining, during some or all of their renovations. In earlier stages, it appears that dining might be more closely associated with the areas of assembly, while in later stages more segregation occurred. For example, in the Ostia synagogue an ornate dining room was operative in two distinct areas of the complex. The earlier one (10) comes from its first phases of renovation as a synagogue and seems to be more centrally accessible, while in its later phase, a separate dining hall (18) nearly doubled in size resulted from integrating a neighboring courtyard into the building. But this pattern varies significantly from location to location and group to group (Kraabel 1981; White 1998). Thus it may be argued that the process of growth and adaptation was an organic social function and only gradually took on more discrete liturgical planning.

Since the earliest Christian communities arose out of this Jewish matrix, it is not surprising to discover that they began with household meetings or other communal assemblies typical of the Diaspora. Only gradually over time did they begin to adapt existing structures for their religious usage. Thus, two steps, the house church and the *domus ecclesiae*, mark the beginnings of Christian architectural development.

The house church

Writing at the beginning of the second century CE, the author of Luke-Acts noted that the earliest Christians, in addition to attending the temple, assembled to break bread 'from house to house' or 'at home' (*kat' oikon*) (Acts 2:46; 5:42; White 1996–97: I. 188, no. 7). Acts also characterizes the

Figure 34.8 Ostia synagogue. Restoration of the interior after the Final Phase of Renovation, showing the monumental, apsidal Torah Shrine. Drawing by L. M. White

ministry of Paul as typically holding meetings in domestic quarters (Acts 20:7), and it was common for whole households to be baptized following the conversion of the *pater* or *mater familias* (Acts 16:15, 34; 18:8). These household heads were also Paul's sponsors and hosts in the cities of the Roman east (Acts 18:3, 7, 24). While the account of Acts is likely idealized and intended for a theological and apologetic purpose (Balch 1995: 232–233; White 1995a: 36–38, 1995b: 256–261; cf. Esler 1987: 207–219), the basic picture of the house church is substantiated by Paul's own letters, the earliest writings in the New Testament.

Paul's letters regularly relayed greetings both to and from 'so-and-so and the church in his/her/your/their house' (so 1 Cor. 16:19: Aquila and Prisca *syn tē kat' oikon autōn ekklēsia*; cf. Rom. 16:5; Philm. 2; Col. 4:15). Other references confirm the fact that key households served as the nucleus of congregations (1 Cor. 1:11, 16; 16.15). From these descriptions has come the terminology of the 'house church' as the designation for this early stage of development and organization at the time of the Pauline mission.[12] Some of the larger cities were made up of several house churches. In Paul's day, Corinth had six or more house church groups (Acts 18:3, 7; 1 Cor. 1:11, 16; 16:15; Rom. 16.2, 23) while Rome had at least eight (Rom. 16:5–16).

The owner of the house served as patron of the community as well as host to Paul and his coworkers (Rom. 16:2, 23; Philm. 22). As a result of this social and economic dependency conventions of patronage, hospitality, and friendship—the social interstices of public and private—were important virtues in the social organization of these congregations and explains much about the character of Paul's relationship with them (Malherbe 1983: 92–103; Marshall 1987: 133–150; White 1990b: 210–215; Fitzgerald 1996b; Mitchell 1997; Osiek and Balch 1997: 193–212). Women such as Phoebe (Rom. 16:2), Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11), Prisca (1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:3), Mary and Junia (Rom. 16:6–7), and Nympha (Col. 4:15) are named as house church patrons or leaders of household groups. It seems, therefore, that the house church context afforded social standing and religious leadership roles to prominent women, much as it did in pagan cults and Jewish synagogues (Schüssler Fiorenza 1983: 162–168; Torjesen 1995: 53–110; Osiek and Balch 1997: 103–155; Osiek and MacDonald 2005).

Several characteristic features of Pauline worship and assembly can also be gleaned from these texts. First, the typical setting for worship was in the context of the communal meal, presumably in the dining room of the host's house. This is the setting presupposed for both the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:17–34 and for the worship in 1 Corinthians 14. At this stage, there was no formal distinction between the communal meal and the eucharistic observance (White 1998: 178–180). Second, there seems to be no direct basis for seeing 'privacy' or cost as constraining factors for choosing the house setting, since dining and collegial activities were commonly held in domestic settings (contra Blue 1994: 121; cf. Krautheimer 1979: 24–25). Instead, already in Paul's day the house church setting presupposed that at least some members of the community were of higher social and economic standing and used these means to host the church and its assembly (Meeks 1983: 51–73; White 1996–97: II. 142–148; Osiek and Balch 1997: 96–102).

Third, there was no peculiar synagogue organization that had become normative by this stage or that was taken by Paul when he was 'kicked out.' This notion is based on the polemic of Acts and imposes later Jewish norms than were actually operative in the mid first century. The synagogues of the Diaspora were still in an early stage of development; hence, they were very diverse, and, as already noted, often used domestic contexts where the social organization closely resembled that of the surrounding Graeco-Roman culture (contra Burtchaell 1992: 228–263 and others; cf. Ascough 1998: 22–23). Hence unidirectional models of influence do not tell the whole story. While similarities certainly exist, they likely stem from the common social context and the reliance on patronage rather than on strict organizational or architectural norms. As long as the temple was standing, local Jewish congregations of all types, including Jewish-Christian groups at Antioch and Paul's predominantly gentile house churches in the Aegean, followed local patterns of household and collegial assembly and organization.

Finally, and most importantly, the house church, by definition, implies no special architectural articulation beyond that typical of houses, apartments, workshops, and other unrenovated spaces. This leaves us with an archaeological problem, however, since the lack of adaptation and spatial articulation means that the Christian places of meeting are physically impossible to distinguish from other architecture. We are left only with literary remains that must be handled with caution.

According to the literary sources, houses were not the only places of meeting for the earliest Christians. Others include collegial or school halls, such as the 'hall' (*scholē*) of Tyrannos at Ephesos (Acts 19:9) and warehouses (*horrea*) at Rome (*Passio Pauli* 1; cf. White 1996–97: II. no. 9b). Even so, houses are by far the most prominent throughout the early literature. Even in the middle of the second century it appears that Justin Martyr was still meeting with other Christians in some sort of domestic complex or an apartment building, 'above the baths of so-and-so' (*Passio Sancti Justini et socii* 3; White 1996–97: II. 7b). Even the worship and organization presupposed in early to mid second-century sources (e.g., *Didache* 12–14 and Justin's *Apology* 1.61–67), do not reflect more formal places of assembly; apparently, there was no special place for baptism (White 1996–97: I. 110).

In later centuries, it became common to associate formal church buildings with putative claims that there had originally been a house church in the same location. This tendency shows the influence of the earlier house church and *domus ecclesiae* in the evolving tradition, even though many of these later legends were spurious (cf. White 1996–97: II. nos. 42 and 50). In the case of the so-called *tituli* or house churches of Rome, such as San Clemente, Christian usage of a house or private property in the early stages has proven difficult to maintain on archaeological grounds (White 1996–97: 1. 1–10, no. 58, and appendix A; Snyder 1985: 67–81).

Because the house church was not archaeologically distinguishable, our first glimpses of the architectural development must come from the first attempts at spatial adaptation. There is, thus, a kind of transitional phase when houses and other buildings began to be partially altered by Christians for specific religious purposes based most likely on continued patterns of usage.[13] Over time, certain areas might be given over to virtually exclusive Christian usage or decorated with Christian symbols. Once physical adaptation of the space and the edifice commenced, then the architecture was moving beyond the 'house church' both in physical terms and in the minds of the users.

By the early second century we begin to see some shifts in the way that some Christians thought about their assembly space in terms of its religious and communal significance. For example, in the Johannine epistles (2–3 John), which likely come from Asia Minor, the setting still clearly presupposed a localized house church under a patron (Malherbe 1983: 103–109). The local patron, Diotrophes, had refused to welcome some traveling Christians with letters of recommendation into his assembly and even expelled some of his own congregation who wished to admit them (3 John 9–10). Thus, tensions erupted between several different house church cells, and the role of local patrons was significant.

Perhaps even more telling is the other letter (2 John) by the same Christian 'elder' who opposed Diotrophes, since his directives for dealing with traveling Christians closely parallel the actions taken by Diotrophes. It says, 'if anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine (*didachēn*) do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting (*mē lambanete autōn eis oikian kai chairein autō mē legete*); for the one who gives him greeting shares (*koinōnei*) in his evil works' (2 John 10). The formal greeting was a sign of hospitality and fellowship; it was not offered lightly. The visitor, therefore, was greeted formally at the door of the house and either welcomed or refused admission, in this case based on an anti-docetic creedal affirmation (2 John 7). The procedure makes it clear that admission to the house, and hence to the church's assembly space, had become an important symbol of fellowship. The door of the house and the ritualized greeting enacted there had begun to function both spatially and symbolically as boundary markers of the church. In effect, they had moved one step closer to equating the space *where* the church assembled *with* the 'church' as an idealized or symbolic entity.

This shift in conceptualization is very important to the later development of both ecclesiology and church architecture. It must be remembered that the term 'church' (*ekklēsia*) originally just meant the

assembled group or congregation. In the Septuagint it was used to translate the symbolically loaded phrase 'congregation of Israel' (Deut. 23:1–3, 8; 31:30; 1 Kgs 8:14, 22, 55, 65; Neh. 8:2, 14; Sir. 15.5; 1 Macc. 4:59; 5:16; 14:19) and was synonymous with synagogue (*sunagōgē*, Exod. 16:9–10; 35:1; Deut. 5:22; 1 Kgs 12:20–21; Sir. 1:30; 1 Macc. 14:28). The two terms could also be used in combination as subject and verb (so 1 Kgs 12:21: *exekklēsiasen tēn sunagōgēn*) not unlike the phrasing typically found in Paul's letters (so 1 Cor. 11:18: *sunerchomenōn humōn en ekklēsia*, cf. 11:20; 14:23; and 1 Cor. 5:4 which explicitly uses the verb *sunagō/-ein*).

Only in the period well after the destruction of the temple do these terms become clearly differentiated along sectarian lines. Within the Jewish-Christian matrix of Matthew's gospel, the terms were used to distinguish two distinct congregations in social conflict—'[our] church' (Matt. 18:15–20) and 'their/your synagogue' (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54; 23:34). Symbolization of the assembled congregation reinforced boundary definition of the group. It was analogous to that in the Johannine epistles, albeit on quite different grounds (cf. White 1991: 215–216 and n. 17). Growing tensions and boundary definition would result in the separation of the Christian movement from Judaism, at least in most regions, and thereupon the stage was set for a new kind of ideology of religious assembly to develop for both Jews and Christians (White 1998: 195–197). Nonetheless, local influences would still be determinative for each.

The domus ecclesiae *and architectural adaptation*

As Christianity became more firmly rooted in the urban social context of the Roman world, it followed common patterns of architectural adaptation and rebuilding. The cities themselves were constantly under construction, especially from Trajan to the Severans. Churches, like all sorts of other edifices, were built and rebuilt, remodeled and transformed with the urban growth of cities (see Figure 34.9). The progression toward a distinctive Christian architecture moved gradually to renovation of existing buildings in order to transform them into places set aside for assembly and other liturgical and social functions. To distinguish this phase from the house church, we use the term *domus ecclesiae* ('house of the church') based on terminology found in Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* 7.30.19 and others (Rordorf 1964: 117; Krautheimer 1979: 27; Finney 1988: 325, 331–335; White 1996–97: I. 111, II. 25–26).

The clearest example of this shift can be seen in a Christian building discovered at Dura-Europos in 1931 (Figure 34.10). It was a typical Durene house that had been adapted through a single phase of internal renovations to serve as a place of Christian assembly. In other words, through the process of renovation and adaptation it had become a building set aside for Christian religious functions. The nature of the renovations indicate that ordinary domestic functions ceased after the renovations; it had become a 'church building.' The house had been built about 231 CE and renovated as a *domus ecclesiae* in *c.* 240/1 (Kraeling 1967; White 1996–97: I. 120–122; II. 18–24 and no. 36). Because the city was destroyed in 256 CE during Sassanian incursions, it provides a rare case in early Christian architecture where there is clear evidence of an early stage of adaptation without later phases of rebuilding. It is also significant that along the same street were found two other houses that had been remodeled by religious groups—one a mithraeum that went through three phases of adaptation; the other, a synagogue that went through two. In both cases donor inscriptions commemorated the renovation work (White 1996–97: II. 10–18, II. nos. 58–61). The last phases of renovation in the mithraeum and the synagogue were contemporaneous with the single phase of renovation in the *domus ecclesiae*.

Among private dwellings at Dura, the house was fairly large but otherwise typical with several rooms grouped around a central courtyard. On the exterior the house was almost untouched and retained its domestic appearance. On the interior, the main structural modifications occurred in three areas: (a) the courtyard, (b) the south suite (Rooms 3, 4A, and 4B), and (c) the west suite (Rooms 5 and 6). Renovation of the courtyard was minimal; it included raising and paving the floor and installing two banks of L-shaped benches, and various finishing touches.

Site	No. of phases	Building type / renovations	Dates (ce)	First Xn. phase date
SYRIA (inc. Arabia)				
Dura-Europos	2	$^{1–2}$house/church	231–56	2/*c*. 240
Qirqbize	5	$^{1–2}$house/hall; $^{3–5}$basilica	330–VI	1/*c*. 330
Umm el-Jimal	3	$^{1–2}$house; ^{3}basilica	IV–VI	2?–3/IV
PALESTINE				
Capernaum	3	^{1}house; ^{2}hall; ^{3}octagonal church	IV–VI	2/IV
Megiddo (Legio)	2–3	^{1}domestic complex; ^{2}hall; ^{3}renovation/ decoration	III-V?	2/IV
MACEDONIA				
Philippi	3	^{1}Heröon; ^{2}hall church; ^{3}octagonal church	IV–VI	2/*c*. 334
ISTRIA				
Parentium	5	$^{1–2}$Roman edifice; ^{3}hall; ^{4}basilica; ^{5}cathedral	III–V	3/IV
Aquieleia	4	^{1}house; ^{2}commercial building; ^{3}hall complex; $^{4–5}$basilica	III–VI	3/IV
ITALY – ROME				
Ss. Giovanni e Paolo	6	$^{1–3}$ house + insula; ^{4}lg. domus; $^{5–6}$basilica	II–V	5/V
S. Clemente	5	$^{1–2}$mag. + domus; ^{3}hall?; $^{4–5}$basilica	I/III–V	3/III
S. Martino al Monti	4	$^{1–2}$commercial building; $^{3–4}$hall/basilica	III–VI	4/IV
S. Crisogono	4	^{1}house; ^{2}hall; $^{3–4}$basilica	II–VI	2/*c*. 310
BRITAIN				
Lullingstone	5	$^{1–4}$villa/chapel	IV–V	4/*c*. 350

Figure 34.9 Prebasilical church buildings: An archaeological survey of adaptation and renovation (White 1996–97: II. 27 = table 1, adapted)

In the south suite a formal door led from the court into Room 4A, originally the dining room of the house. With plaster benches and a brazier box, the dining room was typical of the Durene domestic *diwan*. Room 3 was most likely a pantry, while Room 4B was connected to other living areas of the house. In the remodeling of the edifice, the partition wall between Rooms 4A and 4B was removed. The floor was then filled in to the height of the benches to create one large room for assembly, with a dais installed at its east end. Room 3 continued to serve as a storage or preparation

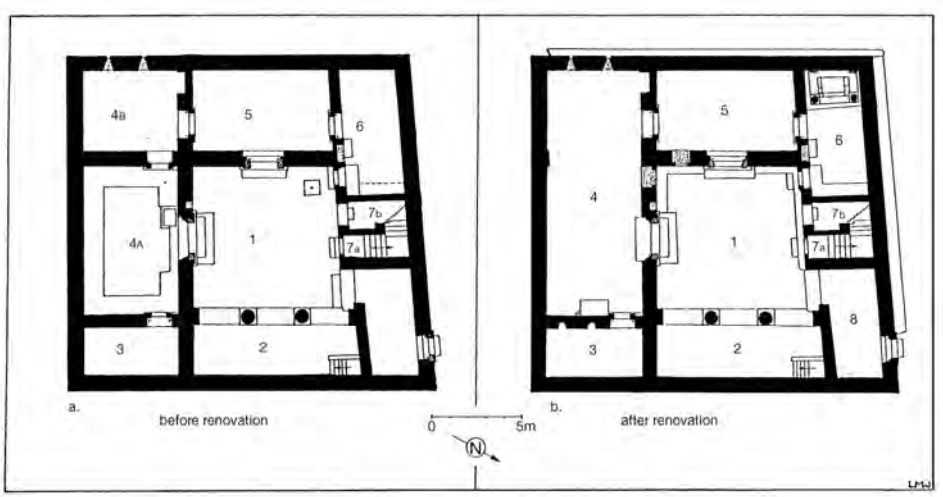

Figure 34.10 The Christian building at Dura-Europos, before and after renovation (White 1996–97: II. fig. 2)

area. Other than plastering of the walls and memorial graffiti there was little or no decoration in this area; a low shuttered window was cut through to the courtyard. (On the nature of the assembly in these areas see also now MacMullen 2009: 1–10.)

On the west side of the courtyard another formal doorway led to Room 5. Originally, Rooms 5 and/or 6 might have served as the women's quarters. Only minimal changes were made in Room 5; another shuttered window to the courtyard was introduced, and the door from Room 5 to Room 6 was fitted with more elaborate trim. Such formal trimwork is unusual for an interior doorway and suggests that this door had become part of a new pattern of movement through the edifice.

Room 6 had originally been only a modest chamber, but in the Christian renovations received the most extensive makeover of all. It was converted into a formal baptistry. A font basin nearly 1 m in depth was set into the floor on the west end of the room. Above it was a decorated canopy carried by pilasters and two plaster columns painted to look like marble. Above the canopy a new ceiling/floor structure divided the space vertically to create an upstairs apartment. On the south wall a small niche between the two doors was enlarged and arcuated, and low steps or benches were set along the east and west ends of the room. Then the entire room was decorated with an extensive pictorial program containing some of the earliest datable examples of Christian biblical illustrations. (On the iconographic traditions, with specific elements of eastern Christian art and liturgy, see now Peppard 2016.)

Along the east and north walls of Room 6 there were two registers that appear to wrap around the corner. The lower contained a scene of five women approaching the tomb (a sarcophagus) of Jesus. The composition suggests a processional toward the font, so that movement of initiates paralleled the scene from the gospels. All that is preserved of the upper register are two scenes depicting Jesus' miracles, both of which were associated with water. The lunette above the font contained a good shepherd scene and a small vignette of Adam and Eve. Immediately to its south side was a scene of the Samaritan woman at the well (so Kraeling 1967) or perhaps the annunciation to Mary at the 'spring' (from the *Protevangelium of James*, so Peppard 2016), and between the windows was a scene of David slaying Goliath. In the borders of this scene two Christian graffiti were incised, and a similar text appeared in Room 4 (White 1996–97: II. no. 37). The individuals commemorated by these graffiti might have been martyrs or, more likely, Christian leaders, or those who assisted in the renovation of the building.

Taken together, the renovations indicate a conscious plan to adapt the building for particular patterns of religious usage. One area was for assembly and worship, presumably including a eucharistic liturgy and teaching. The courtyard might also have been used for assembly and fellowship functions, but there is no direct evidence of communal dining. Rooms 5 and 6 seem to have been set aside for other specialized functions, especially baptism. It affords the earliest surviving evidence of a formally designed baptistry set within an actual Christian building. Nothing can be ascertained regarding the usage of the upper floor rooms.

The Dura-Europos Christian building thus marks a full transition to a specialized church edifice, a *domus ecclesiae*. While it is possible that this house was already in use by Christians before the renovation, there is no direct evidence. It is likely, however, that most local Christian congregations made a more gradual transition by partial adaptation. It is also likely that these stages of adaptation varied significantly from place to place. One might guess that the Dura-Europos building, located in a relatively remote garrison town on the eastern frontier, was not the first to devise such modes of spatial usage or artistic decoration, even though their appropriation was local and idiosyncratic.

The only other direct evidence of partial adaptation of a house for Christian assembly comes from the Lullingstone Roman Villa (Figure 34.11) near London (White 1996–97: I. 125; II. no. 57; Bowes 2008: 130–132). In one wing of the house, away from the formal dining area and an adjacent bath complex, a moderately sized room (locus C) and antechamber were decorated with Christian symbols. It appears that this wing also had a separate entrance allowing for Christian gatherings that did not interfere with continuing domestic functions in the remainder of the house. Like Dura, this

case is remarkable for its date, since the installation of the Christian chapel occurred in the second half of the fourth century, well after basilical church buildings were being built at Rome and elsewhere. Hence, the phases suggested here are not meant to suggest strict chronological limits, but rather

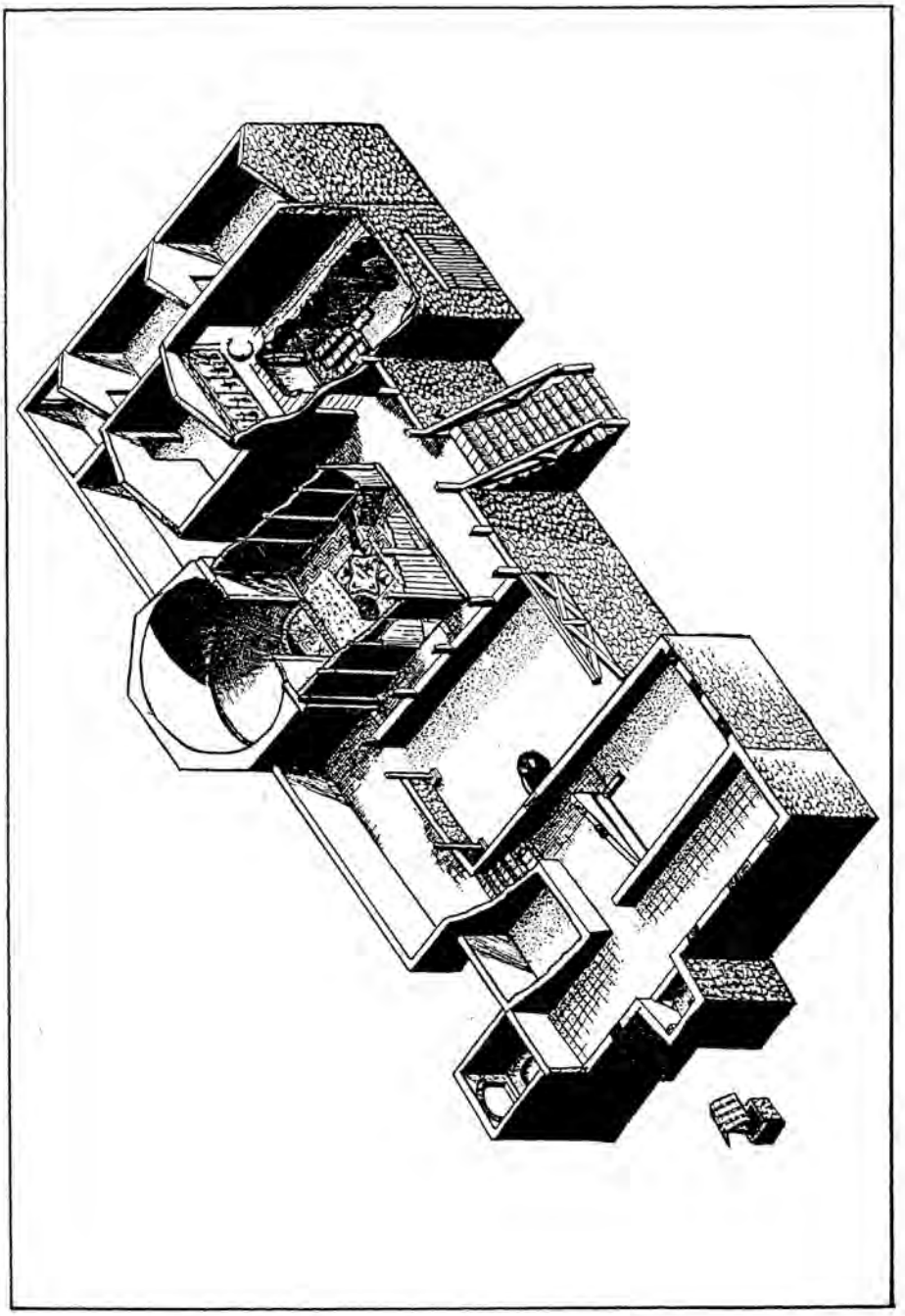

Figure 34.11 Isometric drawing of the late Roman villa with Christian chapel, at Lullingstone, England (White 1996–97: II. fig. 23)

developmental stages. The progression might vary widely from place to place. Neither is it the case that every church building would have gone through all these stages.

Other instances of partial renovation have been proposed in two of the so-called titular churches of Rome, San Clemente and San Giovanni e Paolo (White 1996–97: I. 114–115; II. nos. 52–53).[14] In San Clemente there is archaeological evidence of Christian usage by the third century with the creation of a large assembly hall on an upper level before being thoroughly rebuilt in basilical form in the early fifth century. In the case of San Clemente, there is no clear evidence of a *domus ecclesiae* phase in between the earlier Roman warehouse building and the Christian hall of the third/fourth centuries. Since tradition holds that there were congregations associated with both churches at earlier times, it has been assumed that some sort of spatial provisions had already been made; however, direct archaeological evidence is lacking (Krautheimer 1979: 29–30; Snyder 1985: 76; White 1996–97: II. 1–6). Recent archaeological work on the lower structures of San Giovanni e Paolo have now shown that the earlier buildings (including a house with nymphaeum and an adjacent apartment building) had indeed been taken over and renovated in the fourth century. The new owner seems to have been a Christian aristocrat, and the renovations created a lavish house with numerous rooms on the upper (mezzanine) level. The artistic decoration of these rooms (now beautifully restored for viewing) included many apparently Christian motifs, including a room with 'praying' figures (or *orantes*). It seems that this urban palazzo was likely given over entirely to a massive rebuilding as a basilica dedicated to Saints John and Paul by the early part of the fifth century. Prior to that, there is no direct evidence of a Christian meeting place, even though local tradition identifies this with two earlier *tituli*, that of a certain Byzans and that of a certain Sylvester. (For discussion, see now Brenk 2005, 2013, and below for the later adaptation to basilical form).[15]

At least some literary texts suggest that such changes were already at work by the beginning of the third century in some of the more populous regions. Clement of Alexandria, writing near the turn of the third century, preferred to call it 'not the place, but the assembly of the elect, the church' (*Stromateis* 7.5; White 1996–97: II. no. 12a). Indeed, his emphatic tone suggests that the terminology had already begun to blur. Even Clement himself on another occasion refers to 'going to church' in such a way as to suggest both a regular time and *place* of assembly; in regard to dress and deportment he further draws distinctions between *inside* and *outside* the church assembly (*Paedagogus* 3.11; White 1996–97: II. no. 12b).

Moreover, Clement seems to reflect a worship context where the eucharist and the *agape* or fellowship meal had already become fully separated (*Paedagogus* 2.1). Writing at the same time in North Africa, Tertullian shows no clear distinction (*Apology* 39; White 1996–97: II. no.13a); however, within two decades at Rome the liturgical tradition of Hippolytus makes the separation explicit and further regulates the convening of private Christian dinners (*Apostolic Tradition* 21–26; White 1996–96: II. no. 14, 1998: 181–185; cf. Bobertz 1993). It is likely that such localized patterns of liturgical development were reflected in the physical arrangements and adaptations. The spatial articulation of the Dura *domus ecclesiae* presupposed a separate and more formal eucharistic assembly with no social dining. One must guess that this change marked a broader shift in the spatial articulation and layout for Christian assembly.

The Dura *domus ecclesiae* is also important because it suggests that the edifice had become the property of the church and was publically identifiable even though it had not yet become a distinctive church architecture. Other literary and documentary sources provide important historical indicators to support this shift. The *Edessen Chronicle*, a fifth-century Syriac court record, reports 'a temple (or sanctuary) of the church of the Christians' that was destroyed along with other buildings by a flood in the year 201 CE (§ 8; White 1996–97: II. no. 26). Later, the *Chronicle* (§ 12) mentions a new church foundation in the year 313 by the bishop Kūnē. Given the nature of these references, it does not suggest a more formal type of architecture in the year 201, but rather the wording of a door plaque from an earlier type of *domus ecclesiae* (White 1996–97: I. 118).

The aula ecclesiae

By the end of the third century church buildings were clearly recognized by local civic officials in many cities. Such can be seen from villages in Egypt, where census and court records openly mention Christian 'church buildings' (*P.Oxy*. I.43; VI.903; *P.Gen.Inv*. 108) as well as property transfers and ownership by the church (*P.Oxy*. XII.1492; *P.Gen.Inv*. 108; White 1996–97: II. nos. 43–45, 47). In some other cases there are court records of the search and seizure of church property during the Diocletianic persecution. From Egypt the reader of a village church near Oxyrhynchus filed a property declaration after their church building was seized in 304 (*P.Oxy*. XXXIII.2673; White 1996–97: II. no. 46). From the previous year a court record from Cirta in Numidia records the search of the local church building and describes its dining hall (*triclinium*), a library, and a large cache of clothing, apparently for charitable distribution; however, no description is given of the assembly room proper (*Acta Munati Felicis* from the *Gestae apud Zenophilum*; White 1996–97: II. no. 31). One might well guess that the edifice was still in the form of a *domus ecclesiae*, but certainty is impossible. Clearly the church edifice at Nicomedia, whose destruction Diocletian is reported to have witnessed from his palace, was a publically recognized edifice even though it was not a monumental church building (Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 12; White 1996–97: II. no. 24).

These records suggest that in between the renovation of existing structures to form a *domus ecclesiae* and the building of monumental basilicas after the peace of Constantine, there was an intermediate stage of development in which further enlargement and specialized adaptations were introduced. Although local variations must be allowed, this stage occurred generally in the second half of the third century CE. It continued in some localities, including Rome itself, through the fourth century. This type of development is what Eusebius describes regarding the rebuilding of older church buildings in the period of growth before the Great Persecution. He says:

> With what favor one may observe the rulers in every church being honored by all procurators and governors or how could anyone describe those assemblies with numberless crowds and the great throngs gathered together in every city as well as the remarkable concourses in the houses of prayer? On account of these things, no longer being satisfied with their old buildings (*tois palai oikodomēmasin*), they erected from the foundations churches of spacious dimensions in every city (*eis platos ana pasas tas poleis ek themeliōn anistōn ekklēsias*).
>
> *(*Historia Ecclesiastica *8.1.5; White 1996–97: II. no. 23b)*

Eusebius' comments ring with some realistic elements, including rebuilding and enlarging the old buildings 'from the foundations.'[16] Because many of the buildings include larger hall-shaped structures in their building plans, we may designate this phase the *aula ecclesiae* (or 'hall of the church'). Still it does not imply the architectural elements or the scale that would be introduced with the basilica.

Eusebius' comments were doubtless hyperbole, since he interpreted this period of popular growth as a cause of the ensuing persecutions (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 8.1.9–2.5). Nonetheless, there is considerable evidence that it was a period of new growth in church building and adaptation. Unfortunately the literary sources rarely give physical and architectural descriptions of these buildings; however, a few passing references may provide some clues. For example, Cyprian's letters from the middle of the third century occasionally mention accoutrements of assembly. In referring to the ordination of a reader, he spoke of placing him 'upon the pulpit (*pulpitum*), that is upon the tribunal of church,' which was 'propped up in the place of highest elevation and conspicuous to the entire congregation' (*Epistle* 39.4.1; White 1996–97: II. no. 16.a). In other places it appears that the phrase 'to ascend the platform' (*ad pulpitum venire*) had become a technical term for ordination (cf. *Ep*. 38.2; 40).

So it seems that by the middle of the third century in Carthage, at least, the church building had been outfitted with a raised dais or platform (called *pulpitum* or *tribunal*) for some clerical and

liturgical functions. While the general plan of Cyprian's church building cannot be ascertained, it suggests something of a larger rectangular hall with a dais on one end. In a letter to the bishop of Rome, Cyprian referred to this space as 'the sacred and venerated *congestum* of the clergy' (*Ep*. 59.18.1; White 1996–97: II. no. 16.d). Such a construction may have been the forerunner of the chancel as a segregated area for clergy.

This picture is supported in other large urban centers of the empire during the latter half of the second century. At Antioch the ecclesiastical crisis precipitated by the episcopate of Paul of Samosata (261–270 CE) similarly provokes passing references to activities inside their church buildings. Among the charges leveled against Paul prior to his expulsion as a heretic, was that he had installed a throne and a *secretum* on the *bema* in his church at Antioch (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 7.30.9; White 1996–97: II. no. 20). The terminology used here explicitly comes from the arena of Roman civic architecture since the Greek text mentions the Latin *secretum* (*sēkrēton*), the private chamber of a Roman magistrate, while *bema* (*bēma*) is the usual Greek equivalent for the Latin *pulpitum*, the raised platform on which the magistrate sat. To Paul's outraged opponents, these elements of public architecture were less a threat in themselves than they were symptomatic of Paul's inordinate self-aggrandizement and his other faulty theological ideas. There is no indication that these installations were removed from the building when Paul was expelled. Thus, it appears that the church at Antioch by the year 270 had become a large hall of some sort with several accoutrements of public architecture. It had become an *aula ecclesiae*.

It is also noteworthy that other buildings from the same period lagged far behind in size and architectural articulation. The simpler *domus ecclesiae* at Dura-Europos was roughly contemporaneous with the more elaborate buildings suggested for Carthage and Antioch. On the other hand, household meetings were still common during the Diocletianic persecution, and other church buildings still presupposed some elements of domestic architecture (White 1996–97: I. 126; II. nos. 21, 36). Sources from this period indicate further elaborations in the ordering of assembly, at least in some areas. The Syriac *Didascalia*, for example, is the earliest church order text to prescribe a seating arrangement for various members of the congregation in a pattern that fits a rectangular hall plan, whether of larger or smaller dimensions (§ 12; White 1996–97: II. no. 18).

The archaeological evidence supports this picture of a gradual progression toward rectangular assembly halls. The clearest case of a pre-Constantinian church building, apparently planned *de novo* for Christian use is that of San Crisogono in Rome's *Trastevere* region (Figures 34.12 and 34.13b). It was apparently designed as a large, rectangular hall of irregular proportions (length: 35.35 m; width: 17.25–19.25 m) with an exterior portico on one side but no interior divisions (Krautheimer 1979: 37–38; Snyder 1985: 81–82; White 1996–97: II. 55). It was built by about the year 310 and continued in this rudimentary form for over a century before it was remodeled. In the early sixth century its western wall was leveled, the hall was extended, and an apse added onto the new west end. On the east end, a crossing wall was introduced to divide the assembly hall (or nave) from a vestibule (or narthex), thereby giving it some features of basilical architecture. Even so, the edifice lacked the colonnaded aisles typical of true basilical architecture; only in the twelfth century was the church thoroughly rebuilt as a basilica on top of the original buildings (Figure 34.13).

Two of the Roman *tituli* (the traditional 'parish' churches) seem to reflect a stage of adaptation from existing buildings directly to the *aula ecclesiae*. One is San Clemente (Figure 34.14), where a plain hall edifice was constructed on the upper floor level of the late third century and survived to the beginning of the fifth century before the first basilica was built on this basic plan (White 1996–97: II. no. 53).

The basilica of Ss. Giovanni e Paolo was built *c*. 410 CE over an earlier apartment building with ground-floor shops. The nave of the basilica was set just above the level of the second story of this apartment complex, which had been renovated in the fourth century as an urban palazzo (figures 27.15–16; Brenk 2005).

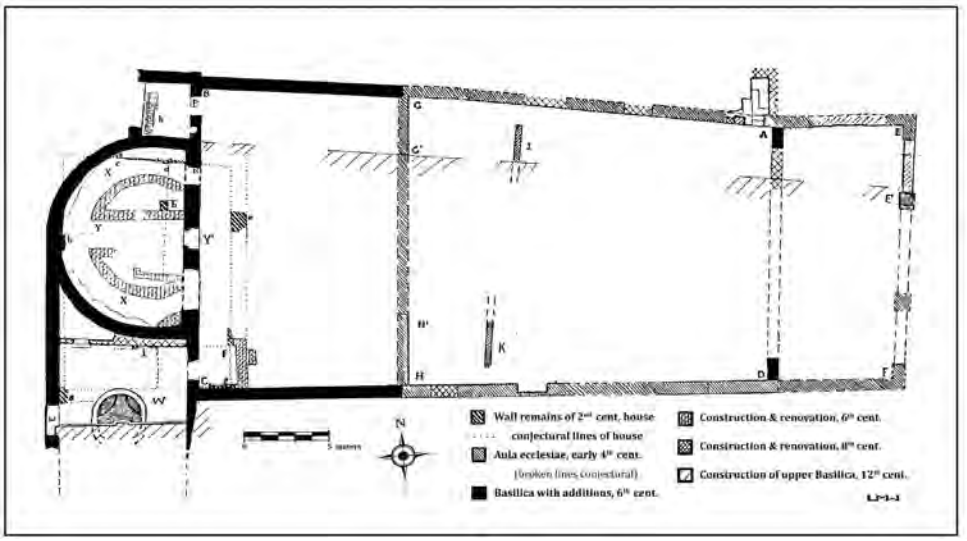

Figure 34.12 Plan of San Crisogono in Rome (White 1996–97: II. fig. 19)

The prevalence of the *aula ecclesiae* is shown by the fact that throughout the fourth century new church construction continued in this form alongside the introduction of basilical architecture. Four cases are worth noting. First is the so-called 'basilica of Paul,' a small hall edifice found beneath the fifth-century octagonal church D at Philippi (Figures 34.16 and 34.17). The name comes from an inscription in its mosaic floor, which also identifies its bishop, Porphyrios; on this basis it can be dated roughly between 330–340 CE (White 1996–97: I. 134–136, II. no. 49; MacMullen 2009: 10–12).

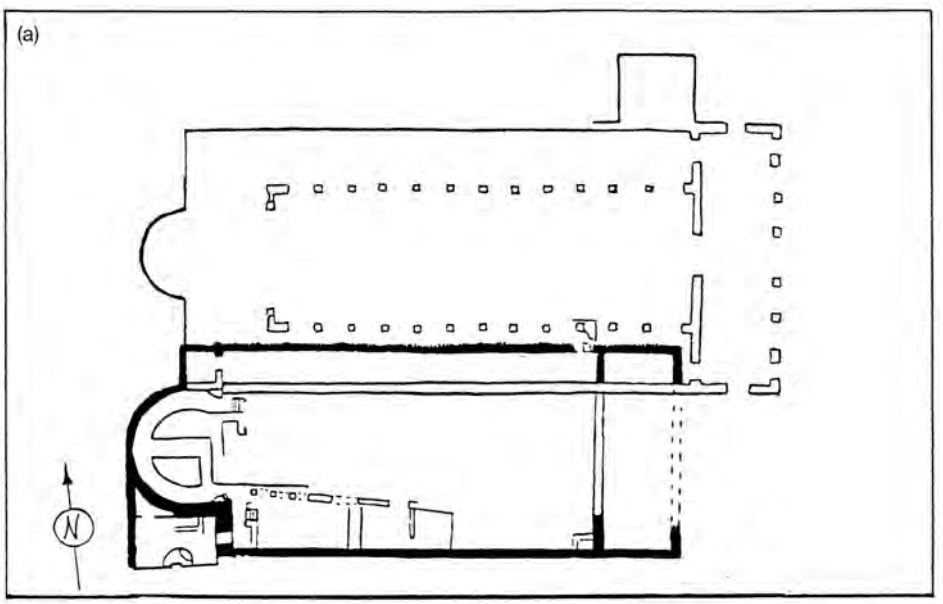

Figure 34.13 Siting plan and restoration drawing of early *aula ecclesiae*, San Crisogono, Rome (White 1996–97: II. fig. 20a–b)

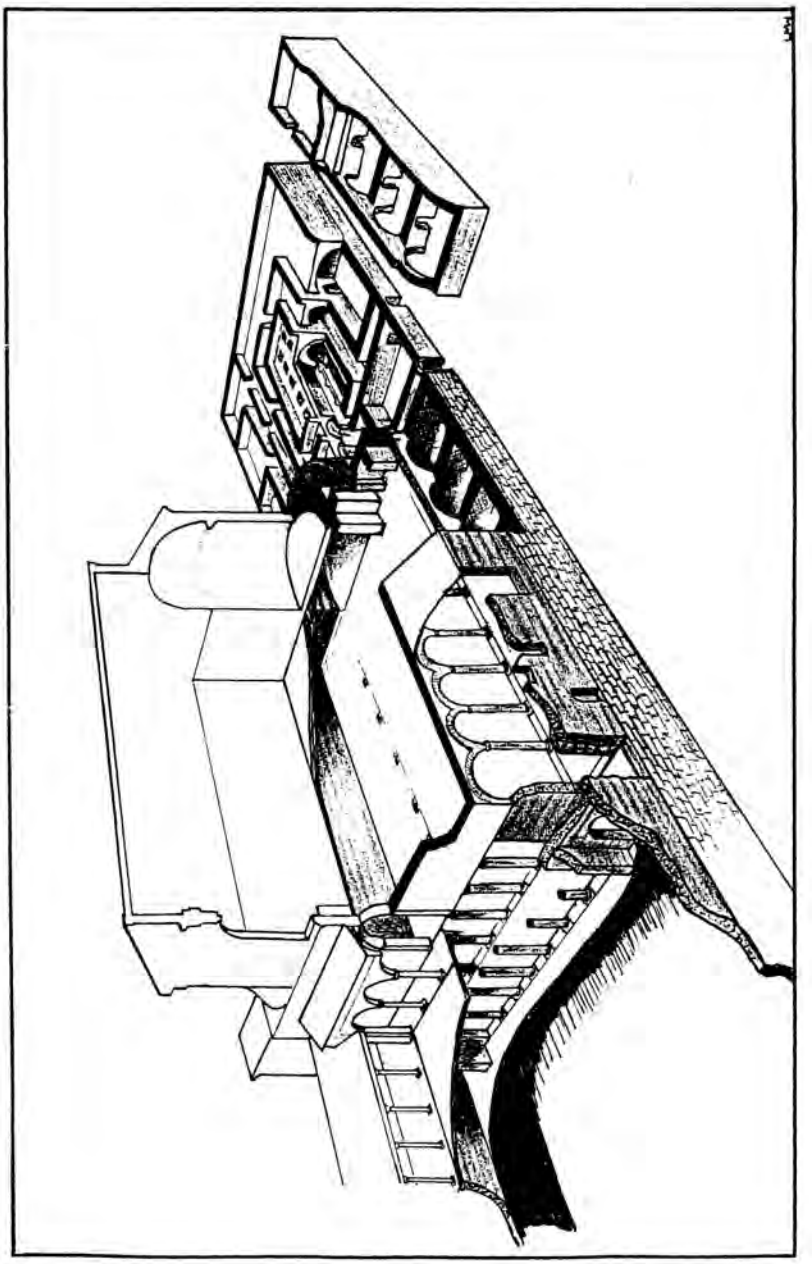

Figure 34.14 Isometric drawing of San Clemente, Rome (White 1996–97: II. fig. 17)

Despite the terminology of the inscription it was not a true basilica architecturally; however, this usage suggests that the term 'basilica' had already been applied to 'church buildings' apart from its more precise architectural signification (Voelkl 1954; White 1996–97: I. 196 and n. 92).

Second is the simple hall from Qirqbize (near Aleppo in Roman Coelesyria), built in the first third of the fourth century. The nature of the construction shows that it was modeled in part after a domestic plan, with a porticoed courtyard flanking the hall proper; however, it was designed for Christian usage from the beginning. In its later stages, the hall was adapted to a basilical style on the

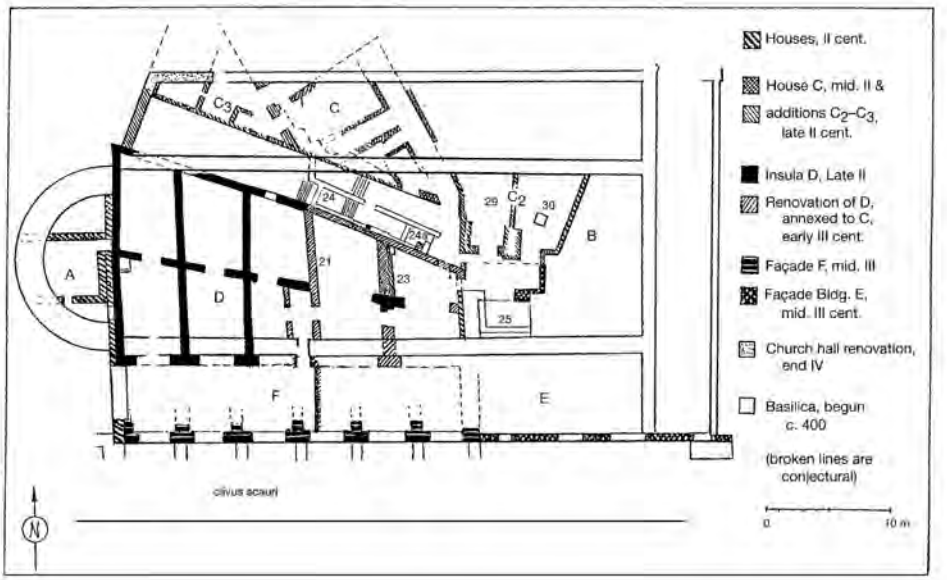

Figure 34.15 Plan of Ss. Giovanni e Paolo, Rome (White 1996–97: II fig. 14)

interior, in keeping with typical Syrian church architecture of the fifth and sixth centuries. It likely served as a village church, and might have been built by the owner of the estate next door (White 1996–97: II. 38 with plans).

Third is the early church edifice found beneath two later layers of basilical construction at Parentium, Istria (modern Parenzo or Poreč). The sixth-century complex is known as the Basilica of

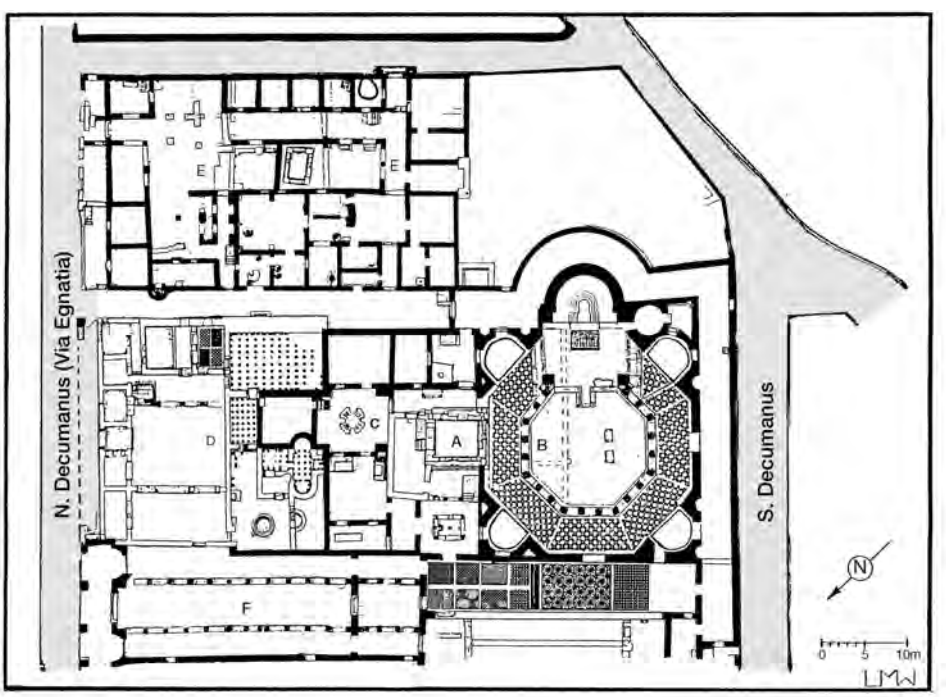

Figure 34.16 Plan of the octagonal church at Philippi (White 1996–97: II. fig. 9)

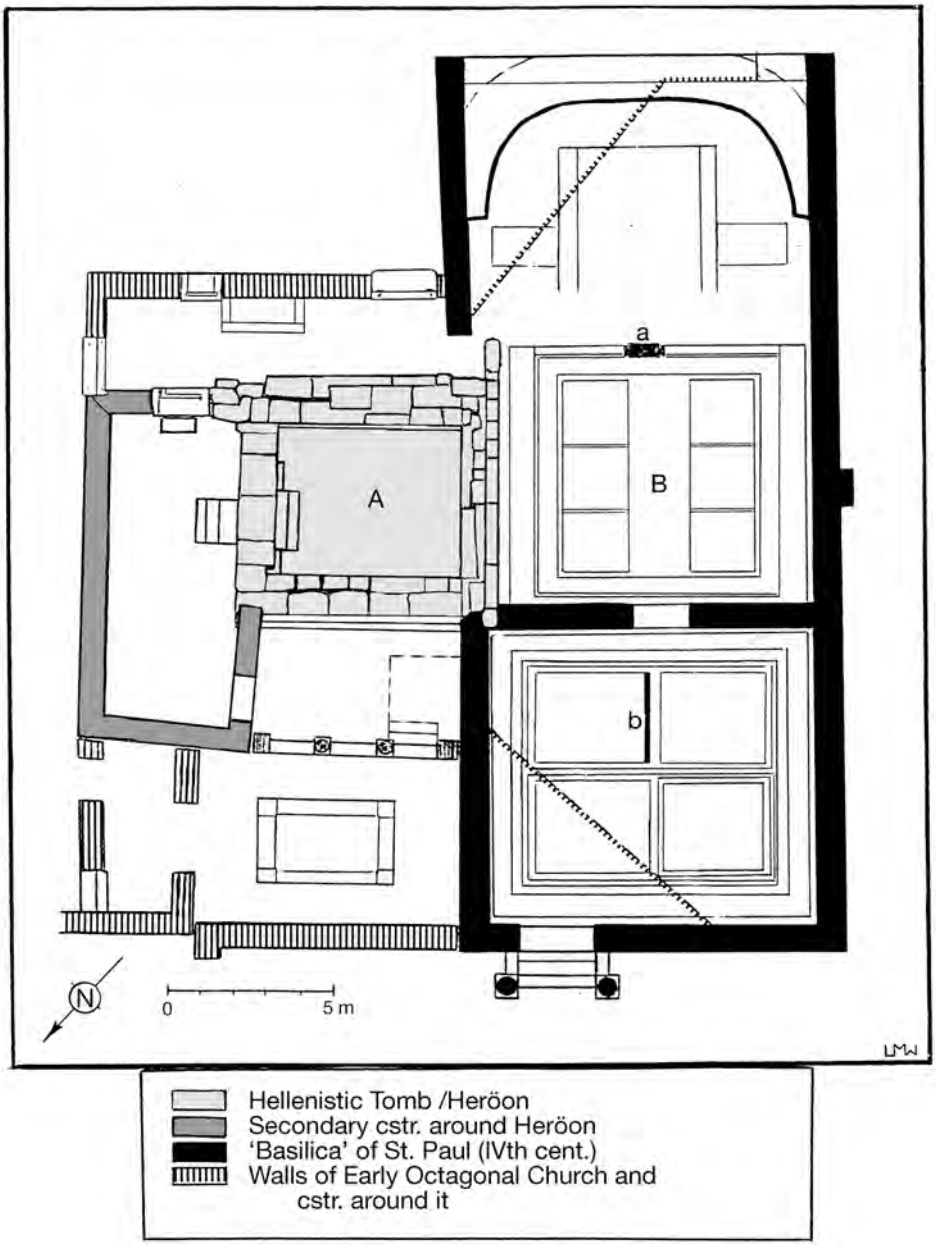

Figure 34.17 Plan of the Basilica of Paul at Philippi (White 1996–97: II. fig. 10)

Eufrasius. It stood over a fifth-century basilica with elaborate mosaic floors, which in turn stood over a fourth-century *aula ecclesiae* that also contained Christian mosaic floors. Legends associated with the fifth-century construction held that the earlier building had been the house of a martyr bishop Maurus, and the earlier edifice was thought to be a *domus ecclesiae*. While some earlier domestic structures may be present, it appears that the first Christian construction belongs to the fourth-century building, a *de novo* Christian edifice with two small parallel halls and other associated rooms (White 1996–97: 122, 194 n. 73, II. no. 50 with plans).

A final example is the Christian 'chapel' recently discovered and excavated (2004–5) at the site of Roman Megiddo (*Legio* or Kefar 'Othnay) in Israel (under a modern prison). During the second and third centuries the site had been the home of a legionary fortress. The 'chapel' consists of a large hall divided laterally into two uneven quadrangular rooms by an arch (probably) supported by pilasters; it has a mosaic floor with explicit Christian inscriptions and dedications, and a central table (set under the arch). It seems to have been built in (or on top of) what had earlier been a domestic quarter of contiguous buildings in the village adjacent to the military camp. It thus seems to represent the 'village church' but apparently also claimed members among the soldiers.[17] Conversion of the building into a church seems to have occurred sometime in the late third or early fourth century, and conceivably after the time of Constantine (see Tepper and Di Segni 2006; Adams 2008).

The birth of the basilica: the fourth and fifth centuries

The period immediately after the Edict of Milan (313 CE) saw a new burst of church building, which Eusebius contrasts to the 'destruction of the churches' during the persecutions (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 10.3.1). His programmatic interests are nonetheless visible:

> [a] divine joy blossomed in all as we beheld every place which, a short time before, had been torn down by the impious deeds of the tyrants. Reviving as from long and deadly mistreatment, the *temples* were raised once again from the foundation to a lofty height and received in far greater measure the magnificence of those that had formerly been destroyed.
>
> *(*Historia Ecclesiastica *10.2.1, emphasis added)*

While some churches were doubtless destroyed, it was not uniform. Lactantius describes the demolition of the church building at Nicomedia in 303 (*De mortibus persecutorum* 12); however, *aula ecclesiae* already built at Rome (San Clemente) show no signs of destruction and rebuilding from the early decades of the fourth century. In fact, new and larger churches, such as San Crisogono, were being built during the period when the edicts of persecution were still in effect (303–313). It is likely that the majority of church buildings, if they were touched at all, were merely 'seized' by state or local officials. Implementation of the imperial orders varied from region to region. The edicts of toleration and largesse under Constantine and his coregents consistently called for restoration of these church properties to the Christians. Nonetheless, it appears that the period of peace and growth beginning in 313 stimulated new building programs both on the local and the imperial level.

Eusebius' principal example is the church at Tyre rebuilt by the young, aristocratic bishop Paulinus. At its dedication in 317 Eusebius himself delivered the sermon in which he likened it to Zerubbabel's rebuilding of Solomon's temple CE (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 10.4.36–45; White 1996–97: II. no. 23d). He went on to develop an extended allegory on the .church as God's new, triumphant temple of God on earth (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 10.4.46–68). Despite Eusebius' elaborate description of its embellishments, the newly rebuilt church at Tyre does not appear to be a basilica in architectural form, but rather a monumental *aula ecclesiae* (White 1996–97: I. 136; cf. Krautheimer 1979: 45–46). It is also noteworthy that the project seems to be a local initiative undertaken, at least in large measure, by the young bishop of Tyre as an act of public benefaction.[18] Even so, it is clear that Eusebius was applying notions of sacred space and architecture to the church buildings both before and after the persecutions (Finney 1984: 217–225). The entry of Constantine into this process would add yet another dimension, but the architectural revolution did not occur overnight (Voelkl 1953).

Constantine's building program

A number of earlier theories regarding the origins of the Christian basilica attempted to find a genetic progression from houses (and the house church) or other non-public type of architecture

(White 1996–97: I. 11–17). Some relatively recent studies continue to argue that the basilica had already been introduced into Christian usage during the third century (Rordorf 1964: 127–128). Typically, these theories have carried two underlying assumptions: (a) that the basilica as monumental church architecture consciously avoided traditional Roman religious forms, and (b) that Christian liturgy was the determining factor in shaping its distinctive architectural plan.

A new consensus has emerged since the work of Richard Krautheimer (1939, 1979) and J. B. Ward-Perkins (1954). They argued instead that the basilica was a conscious feature of Constantine's policy toward the Christians in the years following 313. The plan was taken from standard forms of monumental civic architecture at Rome. Constantine and Maxentius had only a little earlier (306–310) built a new public audience hall in the *Forum Romanum*. Christian basilicas derived their basic plan and construction from such civil and imperial halls; they were then adapted self-consciously under imperial patronage to fit the new social and legal status of Christianity. This monumental type of architecture was intended to make a statement about the public acceptance and imperial favor of Christianity and to give it a formal style within the urban landscape. Nonetheless, it shows continuities with earlier patterns of architecture, where a 'hall' of assembly had already emerged. Thus, the basilica as an accepted form of public 'assembly' architecture was a natural choice. Given its traditional civic and military functions, not to mention specific rituals employed in imperial usage, the basilica may properly be considered a type of religious architecture for corporate activity long before its Christian adaptation (Krautheimer 1979: 42). It thereby offered more grandiose elements of style as well as notions of sacred space. Liturgy was also anticipated in the choice of the architecture, but at the same time it was transformed by this choice.

Constantinian patronage set the tone for the transformation of Christian architecture, but prior to *c.* 350 there still was no set form of basilical church planning (Krautheimer 1979: 43). Regional variations would also evolve, and local builders experimented with designs, as in the cross-arcaded basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme at Rome (completed in *c.* 329 CE; Krautheimer 1979: 51). Initially at least, adaptation both of basilical form and of existing buildings was still the norm. The first Christian basilica in this strict sense was the Church of St. John Lateran in Rome (Figure 34.18). Originally an imperial palace and barracks complex donated by Constantine himself, the church was begun in 314, the same year that the emperor called for the church council at Arles to consider the Donatist question. The construction was completed by 319/20 (Ward-Perkins 1954: 85–87; Krautheimer 1979: 42–49). A five-aisle hall measuring 75 meters by 55 meters with an apsidal sanctuary and synthronon extending 20 meters more, it soon became the seat of the bishop of Rome. The exterior was finished in a plain plaster while the interior was lavishly decorated, no doubt from imperial gifts.

The plan of the Lateran basilica would eventually become typical of western church architecture, albeit with modifications. The classical Christian basilica comprised a central, rectangular *nave* oriented on its long axis and flanked by either two or four side aisles separated by columns. This style of construction allowed for a wide hall while still providing a high central clerestory for windows. The entry to the Lateran basilica, as with earlier *aula ecclesiae*, was not mediated through a portico or propylaeon; later it became typical to front the nave proper with a lateral entry hall (or *narthex*), usually with either three or five doors. Eventually, church buildings were turned to face east, toward the rising sun as a symbol of resurrection; however, the Lateran basilica, like San Clemente and a number of others, had its apse on the west end. Initially orientation of basilicas was not fixed and depended on the existing buildings and other factors in the sighting of the plan (see De Blaauw 1994, 2007: 297–299).

Finally, it became common for basilicas to include an atrium or forecourt before the entrance and narthex. Rather than the traditional atrium of Roman domestic architecture, however, it was more properly a tetrastoa or peristyle court. The first Constantinian building to incorporate the atrium was St. Peter's at Rome, begun in *c.* 317–319 but as a funerary basilica rather than a regular church building (Figure 34.19). Even so, it is possible that the atrium was added subsequent to the initial construction (Krautheimer 1979: 57–59). According to Eusebius, the rebuilt church at Tyre

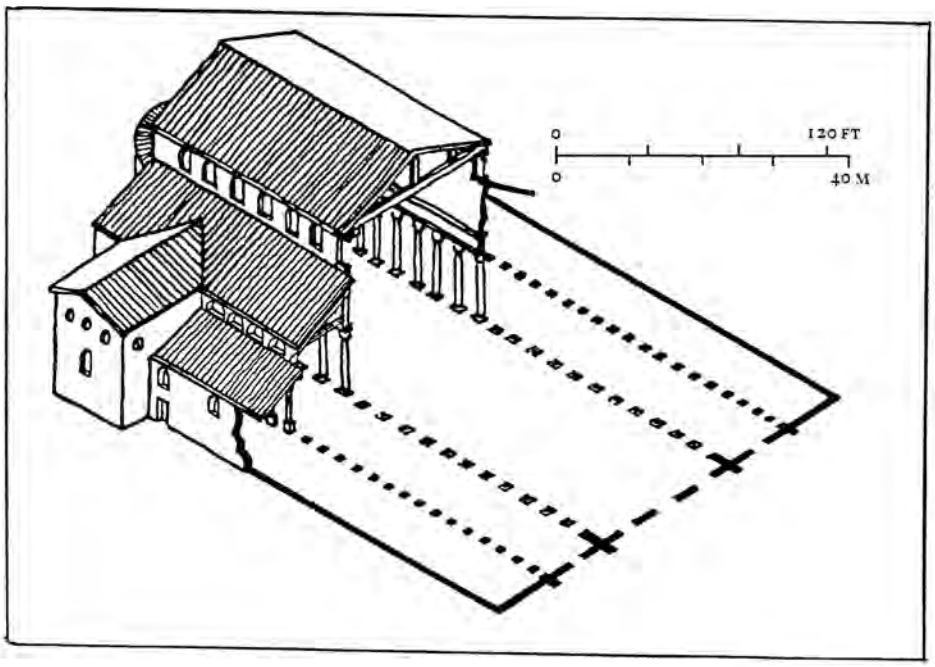

Figure 34.18 Isometric reconstruction of the Lateran Basilica, Rome (Krautheimer 1979: 47, fig. 11)

(dedicated in 317) already contained an open-air court with four *stoai*, probably a peristyle, but his description implies that it was a viewed as a novel design (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 10.4.40).

St. Peter's also introduced another architectural innovation over the plan of the Lateran basilica in the form of a transverse hall (or *transept*) crossing between the nave and the apse. In other basilicas

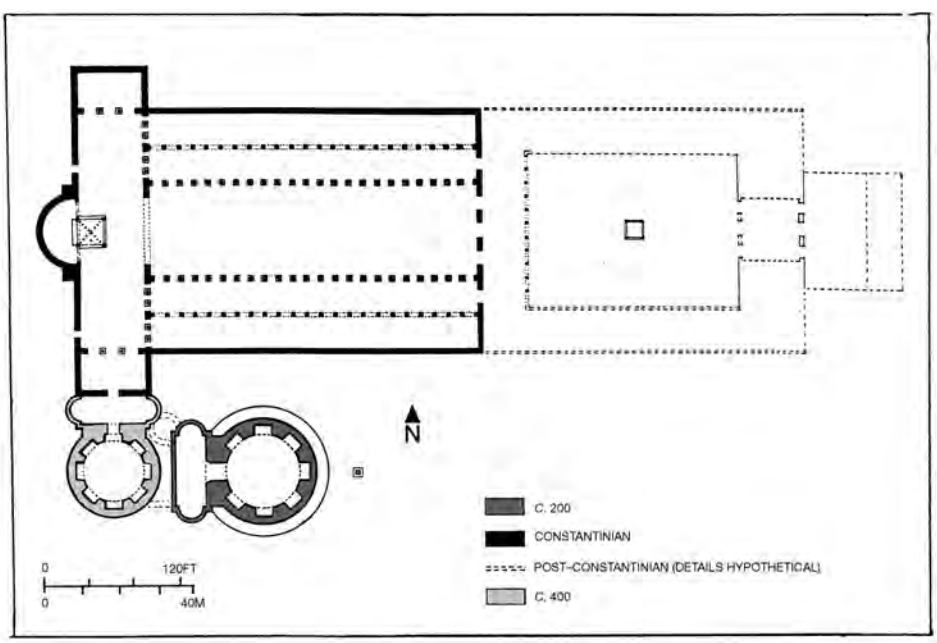

Figure 34.19 Plan of the Constantinian Basilica of St. Peter's, Rome (Krautheimer 1979: 56, fig. 22)

the end of the nave just before the apse served for the altar and clergy, with the bishop and others seated in the synthronon of the apse. At St. Peter's, the transept formally and spatially divided the nave from the apse; immediately before the apse stood a *baldachno* over the altar and the venerated tombs that lay beneath the floor (Krautheimer 1979: 57). The transept did double duty, serving as a place for the clergy during regular services but also serving for commemorations of the shrine of St. Peter, legendarily identified with one particular tomb structure in the earlier necropolis adjacent to the hippodrome of Nero. The church complex was intentionally placed above this necropolis by an elaborate architectural design to adapt the foundations to the slope of the hill along which the necropolis was set (Snyder 1985: 105–115, with further bibliography). The result was a monumental edifice measuring 119 x 64 meters on the interior, not counting the atrium forecourt (Krautheimer 1979: 57).

While Constantine supported the building of basilical churches at Rome and elsewhere, the construction of St. Peter's reflects another conscious element in his building program through the architectural commemoration of Christian sacred sites. Near the end of Constantine's life Eusebius dedicated a biography to the emperor in which he recited the list of his major building projects (*Vita Constantini* 3.25–43; 51–53); his interests turned especially to the Holy Land, as it was coming to be called (Wilken 1992: 82–97). His agent in identifying key sites was his mother, Helena Augusta (*c.* 250–330 CE), who visited Jerusalem in 326. According to tradition, she found the site of the cross and burial of Jesus on which Constantine would build the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Drijvers 1992). Constantine also supported the building of the Church of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives and the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem; he also gave permission to others to build churches at sites associated with events in the life of Jesus, such as the site called the house of St. Peter at Capernaum where a memoria was built by Joseph of Tiberias (White 1996–97: II, 155).

The Constantinian foundations at both Golgotha (completed *c.* 330 CE) and Bethlehem (333) followed the basilical architecture already pioneered at Rome for the memoria of Peter. They were five-aisle basilicas with atrium forecourts (Krautheimer 1979: 60–65). In both cases, however, the actual sacred locus was commemorated by a building of central plan extended from the apse end of the basilica proper. In the Church of the Nativity, an octagonal room memorializing the birthplace of Jesus replaced the apse proper; in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, a rotunda was connected to the basilica's apse by a porticoed court (MacDonald 1977: 20–21). Thus, Constantine's building program anticipated the blending of central plan buildings with the longitudinal plan of the basilica; however, central plan architecture (polygonal or rotunda type) was generally reserved for special memorial edifices, either for the dead or for gods (Krautheimer 1979: 66). At least in the beginning, the longitudinal plan of the basilica was primarily the one reserved for traditional Christian assembly and worship.

Local and regional variations

It is likely that over the next few centuries pilgrimage traffic to key sites in Rome and the Holy Land was a powerful force in disseminating the 'Constantinian' type of basilica (Krautheimer 1979: 66). By the end of the fourth century it had become pervasive, especially in the west. Even so, it must be remembered that many of the older *domus ecclesiae* and *aula ecclesiae* structures continued in uninterrupted use alongside these new constructions. At Rome itself, the apparent 'aula ecclesiae' of San Clemente remained unchanged until *c.* 400–410 before being rebuilt in basilical form (White 1996–97: II. nos. 52–53). For a catalogue of churches in the Roman empire built before 400 CE, see MacMullen 2009: 117–141.

In many other cases. new churches were founded in the post-Constantinian era by loosely adapting existing buildings to a rudimentary basilical plan. It sometimes meant little more than spatially marking off a hall and constructing an apse in an otherwise substantial building or complex, as in the case of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme and a number of the fourth-century *titular* churches of Rome (Vaes 1984–86: 316; White 1996–97: II. 437–438). This practice continued through the

fourth century and into the fifth, especially in the larger cities of the eastern empire. They were able to appropriate and convert various other types of buildings, including libraries, market halls, an odeion, and other public edifices (Vaes 1984–86: 318–321). At Ostia (Figure 34.1 locus D), for example, a bath complex and an adjacent building were adapted to form an unusual basilical type structure. First thought to be a Christian church, it now seems rather to be the private house of a Christian aristocrat (Meiggs 1973: 397–399). The Constantinian basilica of Ostia, a monumental *de novo* construction, has only recently been discovered (1996) just inside the city walls on the southern side of Ostia. It was built on top of what had previously been a residential area of apartment buildings. At least two other cemetarial basilicas were eventually built outside the city: one dedicated to San Ercolano in the necropolis to the south of the Porta Romana and another (now called the Pianabella Basilica) to the South of the Porta Laurentina, in an extension of the large Via Laurentina necropolis. It was also at Ostia in the fifth century that the wealthy Christian senator Anicius Auchenius Bassus (II) dedicated a shrine to Monica, mother of St. Augustine, after she died there in 388 CE (Meiggs 1973: 213, 399; Augustine, *Confessions* 9.10–13). Gradually, the city was being 'Christianized' at the level of public architecture (Boin 2013).

Even more noteworthy was the fact that Christians began to take over traditional pagan temples and convert them loosely to basilical form. This process can be seen most clearly in fifth-century Athens, where the Parthenon of the Acropolis and the Hephasteion of the agora, were converted to churches; a similar fate awaited the Pantheon at Rome, the temple of Apollo at Daphne (Julian, *Misopogon* 361A–363A), and many others (Hanson 1978; Vaes 1984–86: 326–333). Despite the appeals of Firmicus Maternus (*De errore profanarum religionum* 28.6), it is not likely that many cases of destruction or conversion of pagan religious architecture took place before the end of the fourth century. The process was facilitated by edicts of Theodosius banning pagan cultus and ordering the destruction of rural temples (*Codex Theodosianus* 16.10.10, 16). At the local level, however, tensions and outbreaks of violence arose on both sides. At Alexandria, Christian mobs sacked and burned the Sarapeion and murdered the philosopher Hypatia (Theodoret, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.22.3–6; Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 7.15). Elsewhere, pagans rioted to preserve their local temples (Libanius, *Pro templis* 8.9; Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 7.15.11–15).

A special case in this regard is the Church of Mary, also known as the Church of the Councils, at Ephesos, which has long been thought where the Council of Ephesos of 431 was held (Krautheimer 1979: 113–115). The edifice is unique among Christian churches, a double basilica measuring some 275 meters in length with an apse on either end. It has now been found that the church structure was built in the south hall of the outer ambulatory of the Temple of Zeus Olympus (or Hadrianeion), originally built by Hadrian. The south hall was further elaborated in the early third century with an imperial cult sanctuary for Macrinus (Karwiese 1995: 314–315). The entire temple complex was destroyed by Christians in *c.* 400; however, the magnificent double church was not constructed until near the end of the fifth century using spoils from the temple complex (Karwiese 1995: 316). This means that the council of 431 must have been convened elsewhere in another church building so far not discovered. Ephesos' associations with the cult of Mary apparently also faced a difficult time in this period (Limberis 1995). All the same, new church constructions continued in the ruins of monumental imperial architecture. At Rome in *c.* 400 CE, a mithraem installed some 200 years earlier in an imperial palace was destroyed and the Church of Santa Prisca built on top of it (White 1996–97: II. no. 89). Church construction put a new, 'Christian' face on the urban landscape, but often by renovating or replacing traditional forms of public religious architecture with its own.

Christians took over Jewish synagogues as well. Despite an imperial edict protecting Jews and pagans who 'live quietly and attempt to do nothing disorderly or contrary to law' (*Cod. Theod.* 16.10.24) Christian triumphalism turned violent. The case of the destruction of the synagogue at Callinicum in 388 CE by a mob of local Christians is well known from the exchange between Ambrose and Theodosius (Ambrose, *Epistles* 40.6–7; 41.25–28). At Gerasa in the Transjordan, the local synagogue was taken over to build a church. Also near the end of the fourth century in

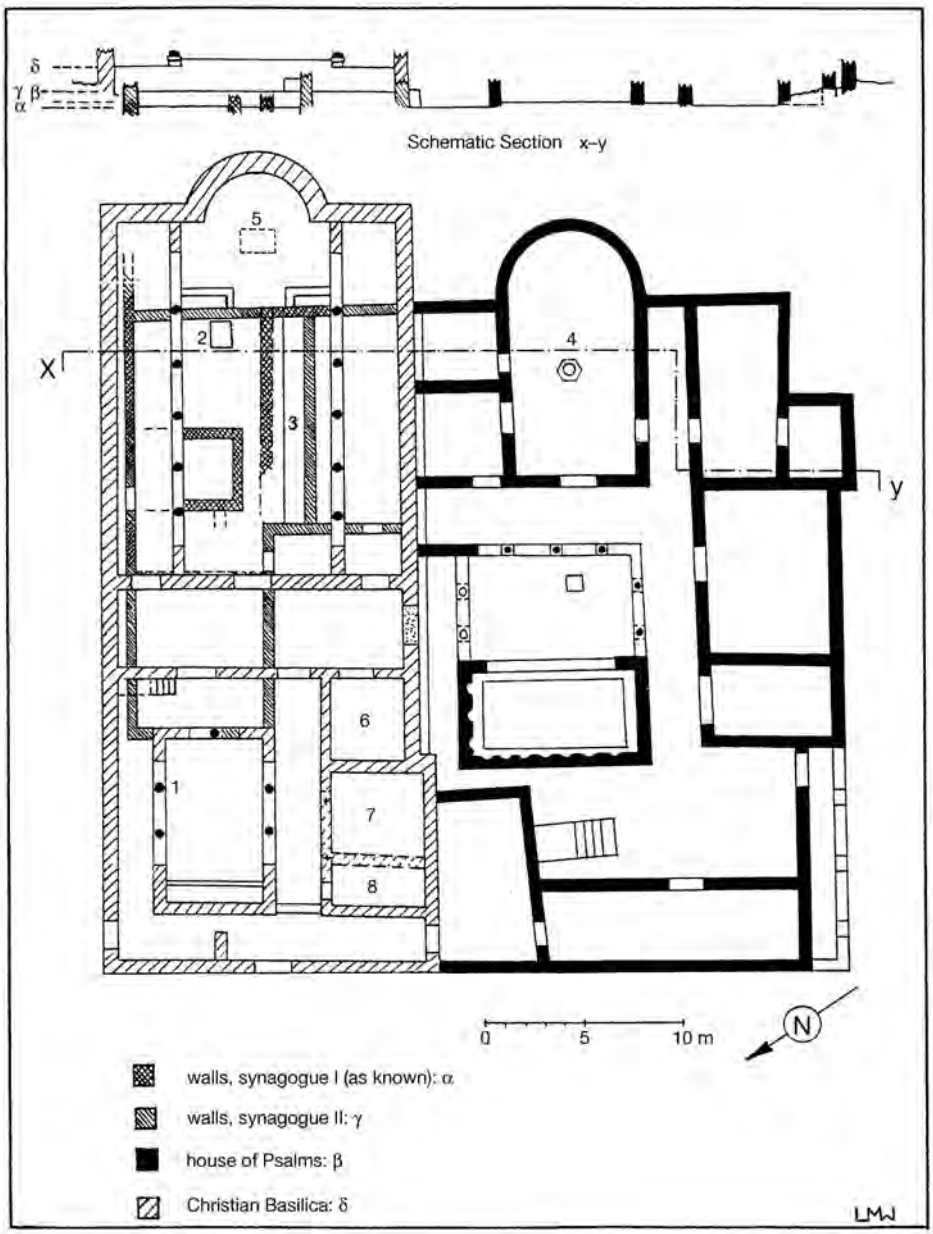

Figure 34.20 Plan of the synagogue and basilica complex at Stobi (White 1996–97: II. fig. 38)

northern Macedonia at Stobi, another synagogue that had been in use for nearly two centuries and in two distinct phases of rebuilding was systematically destroyed and the remains incorporated into a Christian basilica (Figure 34.20). It is thus noteworthy that some of its earlier architectural elements and dedicatory inscriptions were reused, apparently without alteration, in the new Christian edifice (White 1996–97: II. nos. 72–73).

Jews in other cities fared far better. For example, at Sardis, the Jewish community was apparently given possession of one wing of the municipal bath/gymnasium complex sometime in the third century. By the late fourth century, after several stages of renovation, it had become an elaborately

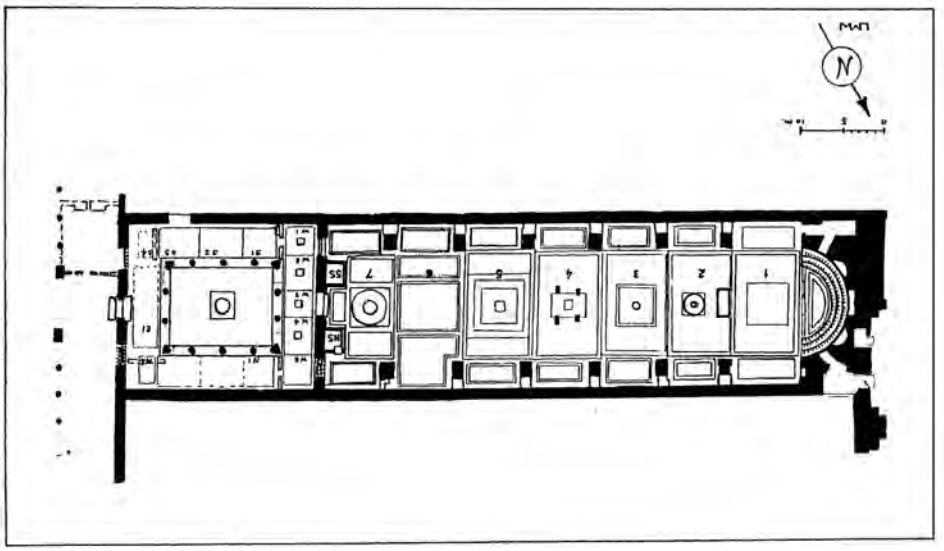

Figure 34.21 Plan of the synagogue at Sardis (White 1996–97: II. fig. 33)

decorated basilica in keeping with, and perhaps influenced by, contemporaneous architectural developments among Christians (Figure 34.21). With interior dimensions of 82.5 x 18 meters, it was by far the largest synagogue now known from antiquity (White 1996–97: II. nos. 66–67). It continued in uninterrupted operation until the city was destroyed in 616 CE.

While basilical planning became predominant in the course of the fourth century, there were local and regional variations. By the early fifth century there emerged in the Aegean coastlands (Greece and Turkey) a distinctive adaptation of the basic basilical plan, typically with a much squarer nave and often with cruciform transept (Krautheimer 1979: 126–132). When later combined with central planning, this style would result in some of the great domed church buildings of the Byzantine tradition, including the monumental Hagia Sophia at Constantinople as rebuilt by Justinian in 561 CE. At Philippi during the fifth century, the earlier *aula ecclesiae* dedicated in the name of Paul was finally renovated as a hybrid basilica. From the exterior, the edifice appeared to be a squarish basilica with apse on its east side. On the interior, the nave was an octagonal colonnade with clerestory cupola; four apsidal exedrae were tucked into the corners. The apse extended from one of the sides of the octagon. The buildings surrounding the church were remodeled and incorporated into an ecclesiastical complex. They included a baptistry converted from an earlier bath building and a large complex that likely served as *Episkopeion* or bishop's residence (White 1996–97: II. no. 49 with further bibliography). A similar suggestion has been made regarding the complex around the Church of St. Augustine at Hippo Regius, since it was a typical western basilica but surrounded by what appear to be contiguous domestic structures (Marrou 1960).

Syrian churches were influenced by this Aegean tradition (Krautheimer 1979: 145), but also developed peculiar traits. Rather than entering on the end opposite the apse, Syrian churches often had their main doors (usually two or three) on the side of the nave (see Figure 34.22). The doors might have been designated clergy and laity, or men and women, respectively. These Syrian churches sometimes had external apses, but many had only internal apsidal constructions flanked by exedrae. The *ambo*—a semi-circular enclosure with interior benches and steps to a rostrum—was a peculiar adaptation to the Syrian liturgical tradition. This structure was situated in the middle of the nave and probably housed the bishop and attendants during some portion of the service (Lassus and Tchalenko 1951). Finally, many Syrian churches seem to comprise large complexes

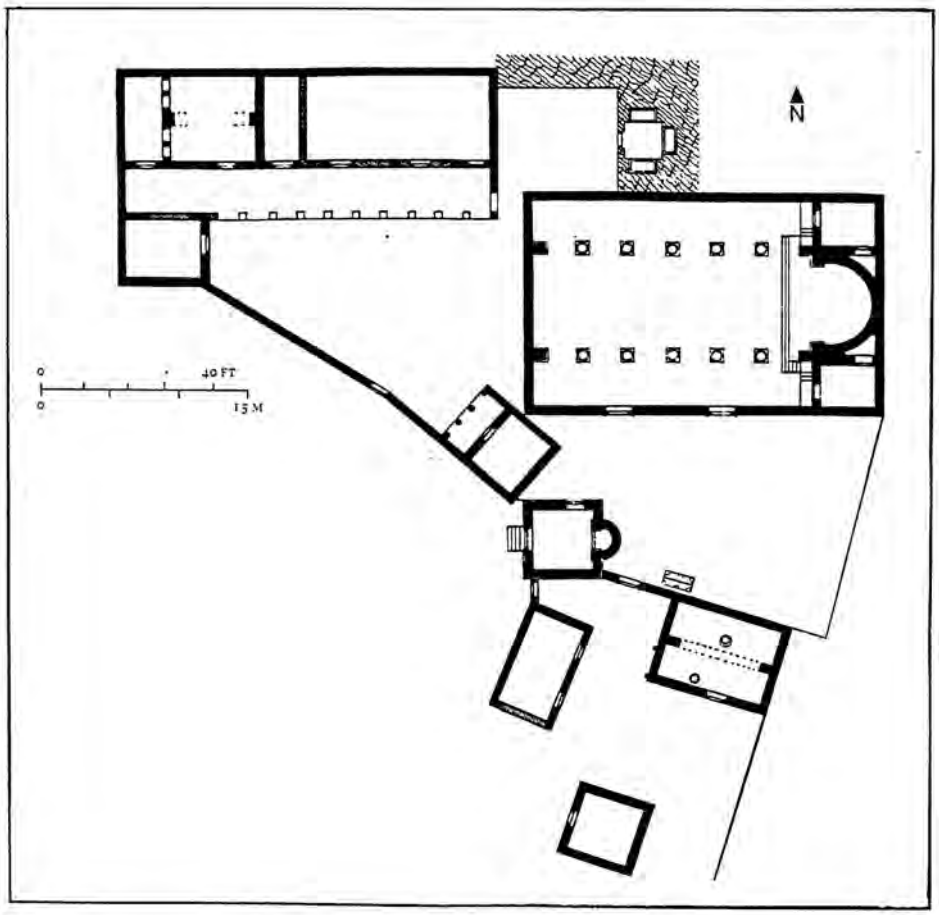

Figure 34.22 Plan of the Church of St. Paul and Moses at Dar Qita (Krautheimer 1979: 150, fig. 97)

of buildings with differentiated functions, perhaps reflecting a monumental version of the different rooms of an earlier style of *domus ecclesiae* (Lassus 1947: 22–23; Lassus and Tchalenko 1951; Krautheimer 1979: 149–151; White 1996–97: I. 122–123). A good example is the Church of St. Paul and Moses at Dar Qita (Figure 34.22).

Other types of Christian architecture: martyria and baptisteries

As already noted, buildings with a central plan (square, polygonal, or round) had originally been associated more with memorial architecture, mausolea, and sanctuaries rather than assembly. Thus, in the pre-Constantian period the architecture of assembly developed in a different realm and different architectural medium from the cult of the dead (Krautheimer 1979: 30). The adaptation of central plan to memorial architecture arose beginning in the second century when Hadrian had the Pantheon rebuilt after it had long been favored for imperial mausolea. Such memorial associations probably account for appropriation of central plan edifices in conjunction with the basilicas at Golgotha and Bethlehem. Gradually, the central plan was integrated with the basilical plan especially in the Aegean regions, later the center of Byzantine Christianity. It was especially popular for martyria or churches built to memorialize key events in the biblical tradition and in the life of Christ or to commemorate martyrs who had died for the faith (Grabar 1946; Ward-Perkins 1966; De Blaauw 2007: 301–309).

Octagonal churches became common in the fourth to sixth centuries. When blended with the rectangular plan of the basilica, it resulted in monumental domed churches, such as Hagia Sophia at Constantinople, San Vitale at Ravenna, and the Church of St. John at Ephesos. While central planning was thus integrated with basilical style, two other specialized appropriations continued in Christian architecture apart from the ordinary assembly and worship setting.

Martyria, catacombs, and cemetery basilicas

The architecture of the martyrium continued beyond the time of Constantine. It was usually a square or central plan focusing on either a sacred locus (e.g., the monastery of St. Catherine's at Mount Sinai) or the relics of a martyr and saint (Church of St. Philip at Hierapolis, Figure 34.23). Andre Grabar (1946) has identified several other variations on this architectural scheme including the triconch (a square building with apses on three sides) and cruciform buildings. One of the most elaborate was the church built to commemorate the life of St. Simeon the Stilite or Qal'at Siman (Figure 34.24).

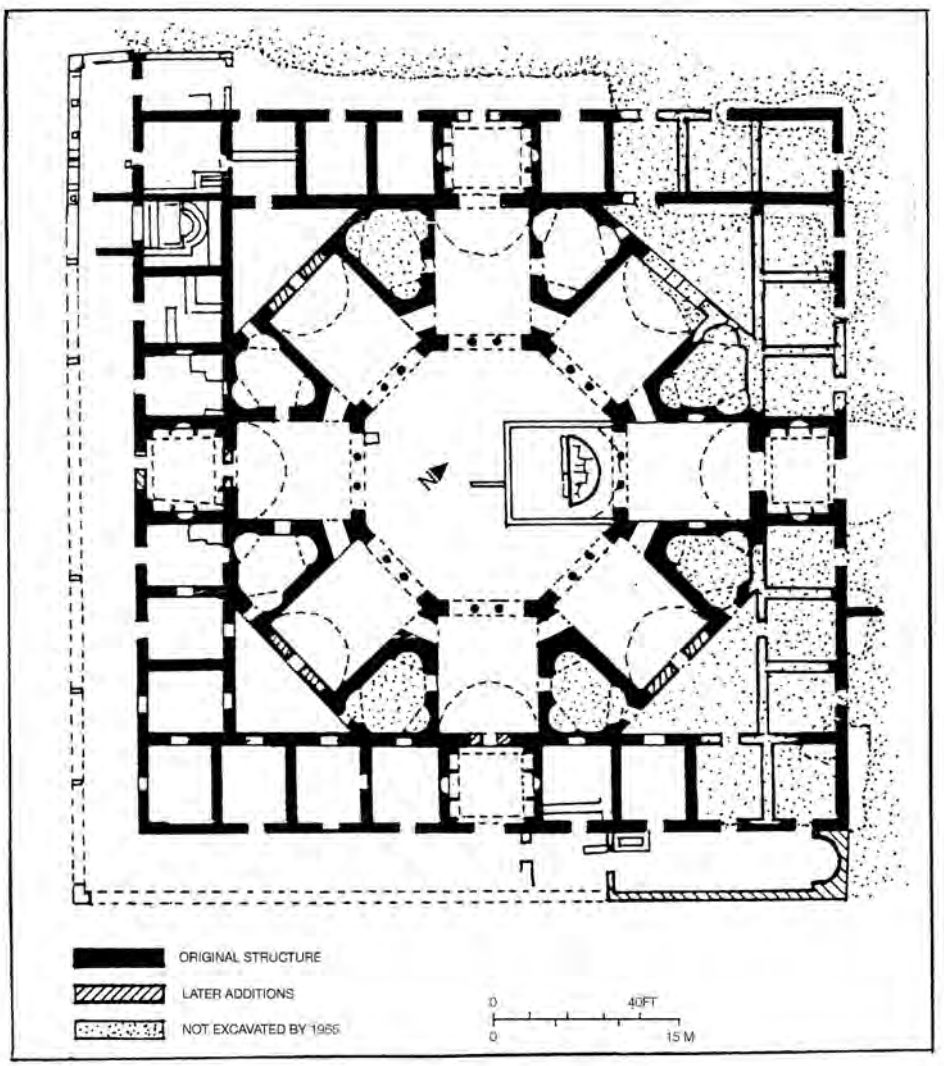

Figure 34.23 Plan of the Martyrium of St. Philip, at Hierapolis (Pamukkale); (Krautheimer 1979: 171, fig. 124)

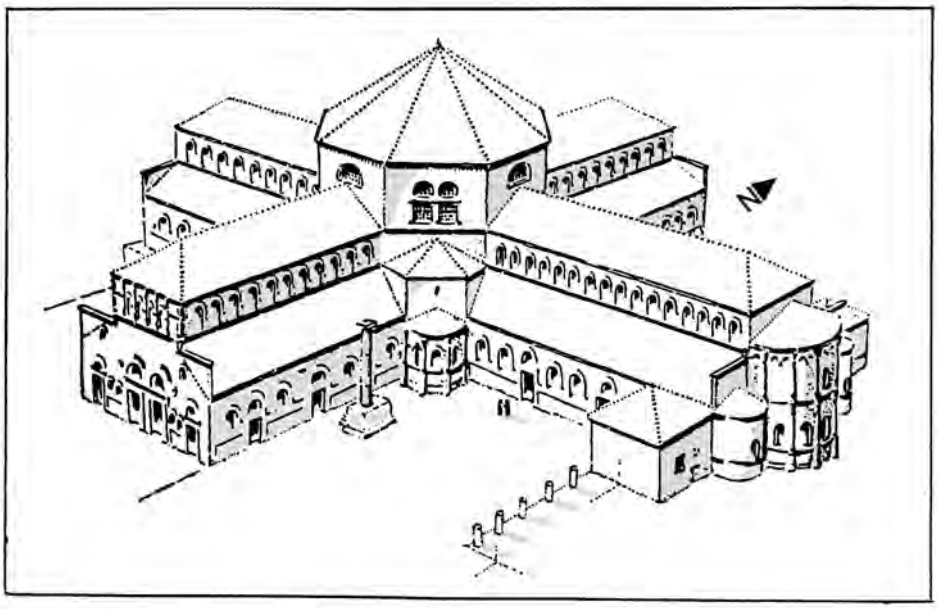

Figure 34.24 Isometric reconstruction of the Martyrium of St. Simeon, at Qal'at Siman, Syria (Krautheimer 1979: 156, fig. 102)

Cemeterial basilicas also became popular, especially around Rome. As in the case of St. Peter's, they may have originated to memorialize a burial site identified with a saint or apostle, but they also needed to enclose larger burial areas while accommodating crowds during festivals of religious commemoration. Ramsay MacMullen has recently shown that the great basilicas growing up in Rome during the fourth and fifth centuries probably could not fit all the crowds (MacMullen 2009). He argues instead that an older tradition of Christians meeting in and around the tombs (both in subterranean catacombs and in above-ground necropoleis) continued actively throughout this later period. Neither was this practice limited to Rome. The massive Manastirine cemetery complex, built around a basilica at Salona Dalmatia (near Diocletian's palace) shows how active such burial complexes might be (MacMullen 2009: 40–45).

At Rome, St. Paul's Outside the Walls marks one of the sites associated with the apostle Paul. Several of the large cemetery basilicas grew up in association with the Christian catacombs, especially San Sebastiano, also known as the Church (or *memoria*) of the Apostles. Originally a pagan necropolis, it was already being commemorated by Christians as the burial place of both Peter and Paul as early as the third century. These legendary associations gradually transformed it into a regular place of pilgrimage, and many Christians wanted to be buried there, near the apostles. The basilica was built early in the fourth century to sacralize both traditions (Snyder 1985: 98–104; Borg 2013).

It was this same site that actually gave its local place name (*ad catacumbas*, 'at the hollows') to the growing practice, especially around Rome, of digging out long underground tunnels for burial (Stephenson 1978: 7, 24–25). The first tombs at San Sebastiano were typically Roman 'house tombs' dug into the tufa escarpment of the hill face. Gradually tunnels were extended far into and under the ground.

Most of the other catacombs began as small family tombs or *columbaria* with an entrance at ground level and a vault or room for multiple burials dug into the ground. Beginning in the second century CE, the older Roman practice of cremation gave way to inhumation as the preferred mode of burial. All burials at Rome had to be outside the *pomerium* (or sacred boundary) of the city; in practical terms, this meant outside the city walls. A result of the growing popularity of inhumation

among pagans as well as Jews and Christians was that land for burial came at a premium (Stephenson 1978: 25–44). Tunneling into the layers of soft igneous rock (*tufa*) indigenous to Rome offered a cheap solution and also fostered a new profession, the *fossores* (or 'grave diggers'). Although not alone, Christians figured prominently in this new enterprise. In some cases (such as the Domitilla catacomb), several independent family tombs were interconnected by tunnels, which then grew into an ant-like network of catacombs. By the early fourth century, this site had been memorialized by the construction of a cemeterial basilica of unusual plan above the cemetery complex.

Baptisteries

In the earliest days, it seems that Christians performed baptism in natural streams or pools or wherever they could find water (*Didache* 7; Tertullian, *De baptismo* 4). By the middle of the second century, they also used Roman *balinea* or baths (White 1996–97: 110). At some point, however, Christians began to build special areas for baptism. In part, it came as a result of the increasingly complex ritual process that grew around baptismal liturgy. Privacy and decorum were concerns since baptism was undertaken nude. These factors in the liturgical development likely paralleled the process of architectural adaptation from house church to *domus ecclesiae*, where specialized areas might be set aside. Gradually they were adapted and further articulated to meet the ritual and symbolic needs of baptismal liturgy.

The earliest known example of such a specially constructed baptistery comes from the *domus ecclesiae* at Dura-Europos (Figure 34.10 above). One modest chamber (Room 6) was particularly adapted to suit their liturgical and symbolic needs. A small basin or *font* (length: 2.57 meters; breadth: 1.83 meters; depth: 0.95 meters) was set partially into the floor on one end of the room. The shape of the font and its arched canopy are similar to a small shrine or tomb. It may well be that this funerary symbolism was self-consciously appropriated in conjunction with the practical considerations of a washing ritual. The decorative program also seems to have been tailored to the baptismal liturgy as it juxtaposed scenes of death (the tomb and Goliath) with scenes of salvation from or through water (White 1996–97: II. no. 36). The font itself was barely large enough to allow for immersion, but the precise practice is uncertain. A large amphora was also found and could have been used in some way either for pouring (as recommended by the *Didache* when running water was not available) or for filling the basin.

Perhaps because of the symbolism of death and resurrection, the architecture of later Christian baptisteries seems to have a strong affinity for memorial style architecture, especially central planned buildings and/or fonts. Over 400 early Christian baptisteries have been catalogued dating from the third to the seventh centuries. They exhibit considerable architectural diversity, especially in the external building forms. Most are artistically unexceptional and clearly designed for utilitarian purposes. There are, however, some general features of font design and siting that suggest patterns of spatial articulation at least by the fourth to sixth centuries (Jensen 2010).

Most baptisteries were attached as rooms or as auxiliary buildings to the main church building. Eventually, it became the norm that only the bishop's church in each locality should have a baptistery; however, many cities had more than one. Other baptisteries were built as freestanding structures or complexes of rooms. The freestanding baptistry buildings were of various shapes, but central plan buildings (square, round, or octagonal) became the most popular, especially in northern Italy. The octagonal baptistery of St. John at the Church of Santa Thecla in Milan (built by Ambrose in *c.* 350) perhaps set the pattern for others (Krautheimer 1979: 187). The octagonal font was set in the center of the octagonal building, and the decorative program consolidated its imagery of death and rebirth. The shape of various fonts has been correlated with this symbolism: cruciform and hexagonal fonts more with the 'tomb' imagery; round or octagonal fonts with the 'womb' of rebirth (Bedard 1951; Davies 1962; Khatchatrian 1962, 1982). Other rooms in the building served for dressing and waiting areas; at Salona the large complex seems to included an auditorium and room for catechumens as well.

The most elaborate architectural and decorative program in baptismal buildings was that of the Orthodox Baptistery at Ravenna (completed between 450–470 CE). The octagonal building was over 11 meters in diameter; in its center stood a font nearly 3.5 meters in diameter with a depth of 0.85 meters. The central mosaic of the cupola depicted the baptism of Jesus by John. Surrounding it were two concentric bands of decoration. The upper band, still in the circular dome, showed a procession of the apostles in two groups of six each led by Peter and Paul. Each carries a crown, and they meet below the axis of the cupola scene. The lower band of mosaic drew the scene down to the octagonal walls. It depicted four thrones alternating with four altars. The thrones bear a cross; the altars, one of the gospels (Kostoff 1965; Krautheimer 1979: 187–189). The iconography seems to reflect orthodox trinitarian doctrine, over against the nearby Arian baptistery. The combined effect of the spatial and decorative programs was designed to pilot the initiate around and through the font in a particular way so as to maximize the aesthetic, psychological, and theological significance of the experience. Art and architecture were played in harmony and thus facilitated the consolidation of Christian culture.

The Christian landscape of late Roman cities

By the end of the fifth century, the cities of the later Roman empire had become predominantly Christian, although there remained an enduring cultural stamp of traditional Roman and Greek culture, in many cases blended with the local cultures and ethnicities of the far flung provinces of the empire (Bowden 2001; cf. Brenk 2013). Urban planning and architecture reflected continuities as well as change. Traditional temple architecture had largely been abandoned or converted to give it a Christian façade. In its place stood monumental Christian basilicas as the visual and symbolic marker of Christian identity and ritual activity. Festivals and processions at sacred centers and on holy days ordered civic life, while every neighborhood could boast its local shrine. Some became pilgrimage centers to mark the great events and archetypal stories of the founder's life or the exemplary accomplishments of heroes past. Architecture and ritual were media of cultural integration and construction of a new symbolic universe. But now the architectural norm was drawn from the basilica and its varied Christian adaptations and associations. They were attended by a coterie of professional clergy who figured prominently in daily social life. State and civic leaders held important seats in religious festivals. An identifiable religious architecture, great and small now emulating the basilical style, dotted the rebuilt urban landscape. On some levels, at least, not so much had changed after all (MacMullen 1981: 131–137, 1984: 1–9, 2009; Boin 2013; Salzman *et al.* 2016).

Notes

1 This is the view traditionally taken in more theologically oriented discussions of the origins of Christian architecture as reflected in Deichmann 1964; Süssenbach 1977; Turner 1979. On the Calvinist theological orientation toward ritual and 'sacred space' implicit within these studies, see Finney 1988: 320–328. Compare also Harnack 1908: II. 86.

2 The extensive bibliography on Greek and Roman architecture, city planning, and archaeology will not be recapitulated here. The reader is referred to the following for further references: Connolly and Dodge 1998; Wycherly 1978; Boethius 1978; Ward-Perkins 1974, 1981; Jones 1940.

3 For the Latin *curia*, which mean either the assembly or the place of assembly (the 'senate' or the 'senate house'), used of the Christian gatherings, see Tertullian, Apology 39.21.

4 It has often been assumed that both buildings belonged to the Shipbuilders Association; however, Hermansen (1981: 71–74) argues that it belonged to the 'Shipowners Association' instead. The former now seems more likely.

5 For collegial halls with small temples at Ostia, in addition to the Shipbuilders Association discussed above, note the House of the Triclinia (I. 12.1), seat of the Housebuilders Association (Fabri tignuari), even though they may be associated with another temple at V.11.1 (Hermansen 1981: 62, 64); The Guild of the Grain Measurers (Mensores frumentarii) located next to their warehouse (I. 19.1–3; Hermansen 1981: 65); and the schola of the hastiferi located in the precincts of the Magna Mater (IV. 1.4; Hermansen 1981: 69–70).

6 Based on the patron's name in relation to Sergius Paulus, proconsul of Cyprus mentioned in Acts 13.7–12 as a 'convert' of Paul, it has been suggested that this collegium represents an early Christian house church at Rome; however, there can be no certainty (White 1996–97: I. 46 with references).

7 So see Acts 2–5, although this might well be an idealized portrayal of the earliest days of the movement.

8 mShabbath 1.4; bMenahoth 41b; Neusner 1979: 81–96; White 1996–97: 103.

9 On the vexed questions surrounding the origins of the synagogue, see White 1987: 133–134; Gutmann 1975: 72–76; Urman and Flesher 1995: xx–xxiv; Griffiths 1995; Grabbe 1995; Flesher 1995.

10 White 1996–97: I. 12 and bibliography cited there; see also Groh 1995; Tsafrir 1995; Hachlili and Mahav 1996: 101–102; Habas 2000. While architectural studies have long since abandoned synagogue models as an explanatory category in basilical origins, such suppositions continue to find a voice especially in studies of liturgy and church organization and should be treated with caution.

11 The Ostia Synagogue continues to be claimed by some as evidence for a first-century 'purpose-built' synagogue; however, these claims are entirely unfounded. Since 2002, a new project of excavations at the Ostia Synagogue has been conducted by a team from the University of Texas under the direction of Prof. L. M. White. As a result of these new excavations, it can now be demonstrated archeologically that the complex was not built prior to the early third century CE, and that its major phases as a synagogue belong to renovations of the mid fourth and late fifth centuries, respectively. The monumental Torah Shrine with menorah reliefs still visible from the excavations belongs to this late fifth-century renovation. A full report of the excavations is forthcoming.

12 The 'house church' in the New Testament period has become a fixture in recent discussions, and the bibliography is now quite lengthy. Inter alia see Meeks 1983: 29–30, 74–84; Malherbe 1983: 60–91; White 1996–97: I. 102–109; Theissen 1982: 73–96, 147–155; Schüssler Fiorenza 1983: 175–183; Klauck 1981; Banks 1994; Balch 2008. Among recent works that deserve special notice are Osiek and Balch 1997; Osiek and MacDonald 2005 (both give a thorough treatment of archaeological and cultural issues in housing and family life relative to the social organization of house churches, and especially the place of women); and Ascough 1998 (with an excellent review of the scholarship). Despite the fact that Paul's letters explicitly refer to houses and households, other recent work (Adams 2015) has argued that the stress on 'houses' is overstated, inasmuch as these gatherings might have been in commercial or non-domestic contexts. The point is well taken even if overstated. The fact that other types of spaces are noted from the earliest record, both for other 'new' cults (such as Mithraea) and for the Christians, has long been observed (White 1996–97 I: 44). A further point needs to be clarified here, however. By stressing the 'house church' over against the *domus ecclesiae* as a heuristic typology, the key distinction is not so much about the form of the original building (whether domestic or not) but rather about the degree of renovation and adaptation as a means of transforming the space specifically for Christian usage, as we see for example at Dura-Europos (both in the Synagogue and in the Christian building). For the purposes of this definition, a 'house church' implies that no specialized architectural adaptation had occurred, whereas a domus ecclesiae implies some degree of architectural adaptation as 'church' building.

13 I am grateful to Corby Finney (1988: 334–335) for recognizing the significance of these intermediate moments or transitional stages in my earlier discussions of this 'dynamic model.'

14 The term *titulus* referred originally to the marble plaque that often identified the owner of a house (also used on 'house tombs' in necropoleis). In Roman tradition, the earliest churches were identified with their earlier owners, who figure prominently in the founding legends of these churches, as in the case of Clement of Rome, who is associated with the supposed first-century levels of San Clemente (hence the titulus Clementis). In this case, and most of the others, however, there is no clear archaeological evidence to support these legends.

15 Two other archaeological sites deserve special mention in this connection. First, at Umm el-Jimal in the Hauran (Roman Syria/Arabia), the so-called 'Julianos Church' appears to be a later basilical hall protruding from one side of a house in a domestic insula complex. The addition of the basilical hall and apse dates to the late fourth century; however, there are indications that a portion of the edifice preserved in this construction may have already been in use at an earlier stage, but not likely for domestic functions. An earlier stage of partial adaptation for Christian usage, i.e., a possible *domus ecclesiae*, may be indicated but is awaiting further excavations (White 1996–97: II. 40). Second, at Capernaum, excavations since the mid 1960s have revealed an area of houses dating to the first century over which was built an octagonal church complex in the fifth and sixth centuries CE. In an intermediate phase, datable to the early to mid fourth century, a simple quadrangular complex had been built, and it appears that it was meant to sacralize a particular room in the domestic complex, which then later stood at the center point of the octagonal structure. It is clear that in the fourth century the first building was a Christian shrine built to commemorate what they thought was the house of St. Peter. Although the evidence is sketchy and archaeologically problematic, it is possible that the site had already been identified with the legend of Peter at a slightly earlier stage (late third century; so Corbo 1969: 71). However, initial claims that the edifice had already begun to function as a domus ecclesiae prior to the building of the

fourth century memorial edifice are archaeologically unwarranted. There is no evidence that it was ever used as a regular place of Christian assembly and worship or was adapted for specifically Christian purposes prior to the fourth-century project (White 1996–97: II. no. 42). Even so, the site is of considerable interest for some of the later tendencies in development of Christian holy sites.

16 This phrase (ek themeliōn) is commonly found in building inscriptions from synagogues, mithraea, and the like, and suggests a full-scale rebuilding on an existing structure. It does not necessarily imply a prior catastrophic 'destruction.' See White 1996–97: I. 128; II. 93, 119, 175, 177, 357.

17 The largest of the mosaic inscriptions on the floor names as donor a certain Gaianus, also called Porphyrios, who is identified as both a centurion and 'our brother.' Another member, a certain Brutius, is identified as having carried out the work. What cannot be ascertained from the text, however, is whether Gaianus was still actively serving in the army at the time or had retired and chosen to continue living in the village (a common practice among Roman legionaries stationed in faraway locations). It is also possible that Gaianus had died before the work was completed.

18 Compare the epitaph of Marcus Julius Eugenius at Laodicea Combusta for another case of a local bishop who undertakes a special rebuilding program 'from the foundations' in this period; inscription in MAMA I. 170 and White 1996–97: II. no. 48.

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35
ART

Robin M. Jensen

Origins and development

Most art historians date identifiable examples of Christian visual art to no earlier than the beginning of the third century. Explanations for this seemingly late emergence of Christian visual culture vary. Some scholars argue that, prior to the third century, Christians faithfully observed the so-called Second Commandment's prohibition against graven images (Exod. 20:4–5) and only gradually allowed the use of pictorial images as the church grew in numbers and became both less critical of and more incorporated into Greco-Roman culture. Other scholars offer different explanations, ranging from the early Christian community's lack of financial resources to proposing that lingering eschatological expectations inhibited the making or owning of worldly things.[1] Frequently, historians connect the ostensible lack of visual art to Christian repudiation of pagan idolatry and the church's belief that cult statues or religious images were either vain and useless or dangerously associated with demons. For instance, Justin Martyr (d. 165) contrasts polytheists honoring their cult images with sacrifices and floral garlands with Christians who understand that such things are lifeless and deem it an insult to confuse artifacts fashioned by human hands with gods who are nothing more than wicked demons (*First Apology* 9.1–9).

Similarly, both Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian assert the folly of idol worship insofar as it attributes the qualities of infinite divinity to mere objects made of wood and stone. Clement ridicules those who set up blocks of wood or pillars of stone along with gods' images made in human form and cites the Second Commandment's prohibition of making likenesses of anything in heaven or on earth (*Exhortation to the Greeks* 4). Tertullian deemed it bizarre to purchase one's gods at auction—buying and selling images of Minerva—and notes that a statue of Saturn could be melted down to make a cooking pot (*Apology* 1; *On Idolatry* 3 and 4).[2]

Nevertheless, at the same time as ancient authors condemned the production and adoration of images of the gods, either because they were prohibited by God's command or because they were associated with idolatrous practices of their polytheistic neighbors, many of these same writers' works provide testimony to the fact that Christians possessed and used small objects that carried distinctively Christian symbols. These items—many of them surviving in museum collections—include lamps, gems, and dishware that were mostly likely made by artisans who sold their wares to a mixed clientele of pagans, Jews, and Christians. Tertullian, for example, describes goblets inscribed with images of the Good Shepherd (*On Modesty* 7.1–4; 10.12), while Clement discusses which images would be most appropriate for a Christian's signet ring, approving figures of doves, fish, ships,

and anchors (*Christ the Educator* 3.11.59). Thus, it does not appear that early Christians rejected material signs or symbols of their faith altogether. Rather it seems most likely that more complex visual expression simply took time to emerge and be clearly identified as reflecting specific elements of the Christian faith.

While textual evidence shows that certain early Christian theologians inveighed against both the production and use of cultic art objects (a sign that such practice must have been going on and therefore necessitating the admonitions), they perhaps understood functional distinctions between art that was decorative, symbolic, or didactic and cult objects that were worshipped in themselves. Ordinary Christians could have regarded their smaller objects as belonging to a mundane, domestic world. When larger art objects eventually appeared, they were not understood as objects for worship and therefore presented no danger of idolatry. Moreover, Christian converts from polytheism had enjoyed a rich material dimension to their religious practice and were as inclined to adapt certain conventions, applying them to their new faith, as to judge their former customs as altogether incompatible. As clear illustration of this trend to incorporate a pagan past into the artistic or material production of the emerging church, many of the earliest Christian artistic motifs appear to have been modeled on Greco-Roman prototypes, albeit re-interpreted to reflect infused Christian significance. Thus the familiar vocabulary of Greco-Roman religious iconography could be made applicable for a new religious purpose.

Probably the foremost example of this translation from polytheist to Christian artistic type is the Good Shepherd, displayed as a youth dressed in short tunic and boots, carrying a ram or lamb over his shoulders (see Figure 35.1). This extremely popular figure had a direct antecedent in the figure of Hermes as psychopomp (a guide to the underworld—often found in funerary contexts), or in the allegorical personification of philanthropy. Given the biblical use of the Good Shepherd as a metaphorical type for both Christ and God (e.g., John 10), Christians easily and understandably adapted this image as a symbol of God's steadfast care and guidance.

In a similar way, a female figure shown as veiled and praying with outstretched hands (*orans*), and who in classical art personified the virtue, *pietas*, comes directly into Christian iconography with little change in meaning. A third person, a seated reader who often appears in conjunction with the shepherd and praying figure, likely represents the classical virtue of philosophical learning. Neither the praying figure nor the seated reader portrays a particular biblical character, but rather suggests certain values (piety or wisdom) that the deceased possessed and which Christian iconography borrowed from Greco-Roman funeral art. Other directly transferred motifs include a range of birds, animals, or floral motifs (peacocks, dolphins, lambs, grape vines, etc.); some clearly were popular for their decorative functions while others may have been more symbolically significant. Sometimes the only way to distinguish certain artifacts as Christian is their inclusion of, or close proximity to, recognizable biblical themes. For instance, a shepherd can be identified as a Christian Good Shepherd (rather than as Hermes) when it occurs next to an image of Jonah or of John the Baptist baptizing Jesus.

In conclusion, identifiable Christian visual art only began to appear to any significant degree around the turn of the third century. Prior to that time, Christians may have produced works of art that were more or less indistinguishable from objects belonging to the wider cultural and religious context. Thus, in its earliest stage, the basis for characterizing certain materials as 'early Christian art' is primarily iconographic (noting certain themes or motifs) rather than stylistic or functional. In other words, some new or uniquely Christian themes began to appear, often on objects or in places common to both pagans and Christians (e.g., lamps and tomb walls). Yet, neither the setting, medium, nor style of the art was necessarily Christian. In almost every case, only the content or subject matter reveals the object's particular Christian character and significance. For instance, archeologists have found decorative terracotta wall tiles bearing representations of the Good Shepherd, Noah, Abraham offering Isaac, or Jesus raising Lazarus—images that conveyed aspects of the Christian faith, illustrated key Bible stories, and identified their owner's religious affiliation.

Figure 35.1 The Good Shepherd from the Catacomb of Callixtus; watercolor from Wilpert 1903, Tav. 15

Chronological periods

Early Christian art can be roughly divided into two general periods, distinguished partly by iconographic motifs but also partly by certain key transitions in style after the initial stages. Beginning during the era of the Severan emperors (180–240 CE), the earliest phase generally coincides with the last century of pagan rule and covers the period of the Decian and Diocletianic persecutions, lasting through to the elevation and conversion of the emperor Constantine. During this early stage, Christian art displays evident influence of classical or pagan Roman prototypes in its conventions, decorative motifs, and style as well as much of its subject matter. For instance, Christ was shown in the guise of the Good Shepherd, Orpheus, or Sol Invictus. Conventional decorative motifs, including grape vines or dolphins, were transferred to Christian settings and probably were understood to have particular Christian symbolic significance. Other themes of more clearly Christian characters were extremely popular during this period and include scenes from the Jonah story (by far the most frequent), Adam and Eve, Noah in the ark, Abraham with Isaac, Daniel with the lions, the three Hebrew youths in the fiery furnace, Susannah and the elders, and Moses striking the rock in the wilderness.

The second period of Christian art covers the era of the Constantinian dynasty through the early sixth century, the time when the church passed from being persecuted to officially recognized as the state religion. The art of this era was largely supported by the wealth of the imperial family or members of the Christian elite, and certain motifs that characterize it have come to be commonly identified as exemplary of a so-called 'imperial style.'[3]

The conversion of the Roman emperor was a watershed moment for the church and, by extension, for Christian art. Almost as soon as emperor Constantine I defeated his rival Maxentius to become the senior ruler in the west (312), he began to patronage the Christian cause and supported the building and rich artistic embellishment of monumental public Christian buildings in Rome, the Holy Land, and his new capital, Constantinople—the 'New Rome.' Consequently, Christian art in this period evolved from being largely private or funereal to being public and monumental in character. As part of this transition, certain motifs from the earlier phase decreased (e.g., the Good Shepherd and Jonah) and new iconographic themes emerged (e.g., Christ enthroned or giving the New Law to his apostles).

This second phase actually bridges the late Roman and the early Byzantine eras, ending with the reign of the emperor Justinian (527–565), whose artistic patronage helped to make his western capital, Ravenna, into a city best known today for its glorious mosaics. However, Ravenna, which replaced Milan as the western capital in the early fifth century, had already been a centre of art and architecture well before Justinian's general Belisarius regained it for the Byzantine empire from the Ostrogoths. Ravenna's buildings therefore are a combination of artistic work that was begun during the reigns of Honorius (395–423), continued under the Ostrogothic King Theodoric (493–526), and finally completed after the re-establishment of the exarchate in Ravenna in 535.

In brief, while the definitive characteristic of Christian art in the earlier period was the content of its iconography (i.e., subject matter and themes), the change in the church's material, economic, and social status in the post-Constantinian era meant that criteria for such identification expanded to include both context and function. While in the third century distinguishable Christian and pagan art works were only just beginning to emerge, by the first decades of the fifth century and through the early Byzantine era, the culture was so permeated by Christian interests that the categories 'secular' and 'sacred' were less sharply defined, and the appellation 'Christian art' came to be as much defined by its physical context (e.g., church décor or pictorial embellishments on liturgical vessels) as by its iconographic content.

Provenance and context

Aside from the lack of first- or second-century evidence, the extant corpus of pre-Constantinian Christian art is limited in two additional respects. First, much of the evidence is of limited geographical provenance. Although significant exceptions exist, most extant examples of earliest Christian art derive from the environs of Rome. In fact, among the earliest and most significant examples of Christian art are frescoes on the walls of the third- and fourth-century Christian catacombs found just outside Rome itself. One of the earliest of these extensive underground cemeteries, the Catacomb of Callixtus, was named for an early Bishop of Rome (*c.* 217–222) who, according to an ancient source, was put in charge of this first subterranean Christian cemetery while still a deacon of the church under Pope Zephyrinus (Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies [the Philosophumena]* 9.7).

Roman dominance of extant pre-Constantinian Christian imagery is not absolute, however. Other Italian sites have produced important examples of early Christian art, including the Catacombs of San Gennaro in Naples. Scholars believe that the Cleveland marble sculptures, generally dated to the third century, came from a Christian family tomb in Asia Minor. Asia Minor may also have been the source of partially finished marble sarcophagi that were sent to workshops in Rome for completion. Additionally, ateliers in Gaul produced many surviving examples of early Christian relief sculpture on sarcophagi, although the influence of Roman workshops is apparent in their technique

and style, and some may have been initially carved in Rome for export. Archeologists also have discovered some works of art in Christian catacombs in North Africa and Thessalonica. Arguably, the single most important non-Roman monument is the mid third-century house-church in Dura-Europos, a city on the Roman/Parthian border (modern-day western Syria). When archeologists excavated the site in the 1940s, they found the baptistery of this converted domestic structure with its ceiling and many of its wall frescoes intact, thus discovering a unique example of early Christian architecture and interior decoration (see Figure 35.2).

To a great degree, the limited geographical provenance of early Christian art is an accident of survival and, unlike the lack of pre-third-century data, not a factor that can be explained by the nature of the data itself. Much of the other non-Roman material, which must have existed, presumably has been lost in the continuous urban renewal of cities and towns or from sporadic, purposeful destruction. Accordingly, the fact that the preponderance of existing artistic data derive from Rome is neither proof of Roman superiority in the crafts nor the particular authority of the church at Rome at this early date. Early Christian theology and practice in other regions of the Roman Empire, including Spain, Egypt, Syria, Greece, the British Isles, and North Africa, reflect robust regional variations that are paralleled by stylistic and thematic distinctions in the surviving examples of non-Roman Christian art from later eras.

The second limiting characteristic of the earliest Christian art is the fact that it derives largely from funereal contexts. The major portion of extant pre-Constantinian artwork appears to have served primarily as decoration for tomb chambers or stone coffins (catacomb paintings and relief sculpture on stone sarcophagi). Even certain rare small sculptures in the round, or everyday or domestic items bearing recognizably Christian symbols (e.g., pottery lamps, gold glasses, and inscribed gems) mostly derive from tomb contexts.

The significance of this fact is difficult to determine given the lack of comparative material from non-funereal contexts. Apart from the unique example of the house-church at Dura-Europos and a few rare examples from other parts of the world, including Aquileia in northeastern Italy (whose double basilica may date from both before and after the Constantinian era), scholars may

Figure 35.2 The baptistery from the Christian building at Dura-Europos; photo from the Yale University Art Gallery and used with its permission

only speculate whether religious imagery typically embellished church walls or pavements and, if so, whether that religious imagery would have been more or less identical to the iconography that decorated burial settings. The Spanish Council of Elvira in the early fourth century condemned the decoration of church walls with religious paintings (Canon 36); a prohibition that suggests such decorations existed. The acts of the council, however, omit any description of the offending paintings. Later in the fourth century, Paulinus, the aristocratic monk and later Bishop of Nola described the paintings he had commissioned for the church he had built and dedicated to the saint, Felix, primarily of saints and biblical figures. Paulinus, obviously comfortable with the use of art in churches, defends his use of art by giving it a didactic purpose—to counter the popularity of pagan idols and to elevate and inspire his Christian flock (*Poems* 27 and 32).

Nevertheless, based on the single example of the Dura-Europos baptistery and some of the stylistic parallels to Roman wall painting in domestic structures, it seems likely that church-wall frescoes or floor mosaics shared certain themes and painting techniques with the catacomb frescoes. The Dura frescoes included representations of the Good Shepherd, Adam and Eve, the healing of the paralytic, and the woman at the well—all scenes found also in the catacombs. Even so, the sample is too small for any clear assertions about either the existence or the specific appearance of religious images in other Christian buildings.

As noted above, during the fourth century, both the context and the content of Christian art changed. Churches were built as public buildings, paid for from the imperial treasury, and decorated by the best artisans. At the same time as art began to appear on the walls and in apses of basilicas in Rome, Constantinople, Greece, and the Holy Land, Christians stopped using the catacombs as burial places. Thus, the private, domestic, and funereal character of the surviving evidence was replaced by a dominantly ecclesial one. Moreover, whereas in the earliest period, the distinction between Christian and pagan art was almost entirely in their different themes or iconographical motifs, by the mid fourth century the setting of the art was determinative. A peacock on the wall of a Roman tomb might have been painted either for a pagan or for a Christian client, while a peacock in mosaic above the arch of an apse in a Christian basilica clearly had a Christian symbolic valence.

Wall painting

Apart from the house-church at Dura-Europos and other early examples such as the fourth-century Christian buildings in Lullingstone, Kent, extant frescoes that belong to the earliest period of Christian art mostly appear in a funerary context, on the walls and ceilings of tombs in the Roman catacombs. Their preservation is primarily due to their being underground. The earliest examples of these extensive underground cemeteries with their combination of wall and chamber burials include the third-century catacombs of Callixtus, Sebastian, Domitilla, and Priscilla. Although their use and decoration as burial places continued into the later fourth century, and they continued to be places of pilgrimage through the Middle Ages, catacomb burial mainly had ceased by the fifth century. Nevertheless, some of the most significant examples of fourth-century wall painting come from the catacombs of Saints Peter and Marcellinus, and the Hypogeum of the Via Dio Compagni (Via Latina), also in Rome.

Fresco painting on tomb walls had been a Roman custom prior to the Christian adaptation of that tradition. The continuity with this pagan Roman practice may clearly be seen in the composition and style of the paintings themselves along with many of the decorative elements (borders, urns, birds, garlands, etc.), features that also appear on the walls of Roman villas of the same period. In fact, many of the earliest paintings contained subjects that were as likely to have been pagan as Christian in meaning, including the ubiquitous praying figure (*orans*), the shepherd with sheep, or a funeral banquet (see Figure 35.3).

Figure 35.3 Funeral banquet from the Catacomb of Callixtus; watercolor from Wilpert 1903, Tav. 66

Although still within the broad tradition of Roman wall painting, the particular technique or style of the Christian catacomb frescoes was often more sketchy and expressionistic than the typical Roman wall painting, and these images are sometimes disparagingly described by historians as being crude, of poor quality, or carelessly executed. These features, however, may be less due to a lack of skill, time, or money expended than to the development of a kind of symbolic shorthand designed to communicate aspects of the faith. Figures were often awkwardly rendered with a limited color palate, sometimes difficult to identify, flat and two-dimensional, and supported by a minimum of narrative details. Noah, for example, is shown standing with his arms up in prayer in a small box-like ark, while a dove flies into the scene carrying an olive branch in its beak. This simple or abbreviated image is sufficient to remind the viewer of the entire story and its significance, making other details (Noah's wife, sons, elaborate boat stocked with lots of animals)—or even careful rendering of the figures—superfluous.

Furthermore, the paintings in the Roman catacombs were not intended for the view of the general public, but were private and personal in their character. They were in small spaces that were poorly lit and infrequently visited. Since Christians did not believe tomb paintings had particular value to the deceased in transition to the afterlife (as is true for ancient Egyptian tomb paintings), the function of these paintings was most likely entirely devotional and decorative—meant to comfort, inspire, or instruct relatives or friends during their annual visits to the graves of loved ones on festival or anniversary days.

The subject matter of these paintings was mainly drawn from biblical narratives, and figures were adapted from classical Roman prototypes such as the shepherd or praying figure. Iconographic references to scripture are often the primary basis for identifying these paintings as Christian. The most common biblical images include Adam and Eve, Jonah entering and exiting the sea creature's mouth, Moses striking the rock to get water in the wilderness, Abraham about to offer his son Isaac, Noah in his ark, the three Hebrew youths in the fiery furnace, Susanna and the elders, and Daniel flanked by lions. Representations of New Testament stories also appear, but are outnumbered by scenes from the Christian Old Testament almost five to one. The most popular New Testament scenes show Jesus in the role of teacher, healer, or wonder-worker and include Jesus healing the paralytic, the blind man, or the woman with the hemorrhage; Jesus multiplying loaves and fishes; and Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.[4] Also depicted is the meeting of Jesus and the Samaritan woman from John 4. Representations of Jesus' incarnation, birth, Passion, or resurrection are virtually unknown in this early period.

The preference for art images based on Old Testament narratives led some scholars to theorize that Roman artists were particularly influenced by Jewish iconography, or had access to certain illustrated Bibles of the Jews—Bibles that provided the basic composition of many of the images in the Christian catacomb paintings.[5] However, no such illuminated bibles have been discovered. Moreover, the most important example of Jewish art from this early period—the wall frescoes from the synagogue at Dura-Europos—show quite different biblical scenes and, in the few examples of parallel scenes, have very different compositions. Furthermore, the Hebrew scripture-based images that appear in the catacombs are usually abbreviated rather than detailed, and not always what to modern eyes would be obvious choices. For example, Moses striking the rock is far more common in Christian catacomb art than Moses encountering the burning bush or even Moses receiving the Law.

The predominance of Old Testament images may indicate the importance of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures for the early church. Whether in homilies, catechetical lectures, or in liturgy (prayers and hymns, in particular), preachers and theologians constantly held up episodes or characters from the Old Testament as 'types' prefiguring episodes in the life of Jesus Christ and the salvation offered by the church. The paintings in the catacombs can be understood as interpreting the texts in a similar way, although in visual rather than in written form. Thus representations of Jonah point to the death and resurrection of Christ as well as the death and rebirth of Christian baptism. Abraham offering Isaac figuratively alluded to the sacrifice of the beloved Son on the cross.

This form of visual exegesis also may account for the lack of certain narrative details in the image, or the preference for more obscure stories over the obvious. All that was needed was the visual cue as reminder—a symbol that carried far more meaning than its simplicity would suggest.

One particular image, that of John the Baptist baptizing a youthful—or even childlike—Jesus in the waters of the Jordan, is an exception to the otherwise general presentation of Jesus as wonder-worker or healer. Along with certain other figures or motifs that have no particular scriptural referents (e.g., a banquet scene, images of fish and loaves, or grapevines ripe with fruit), these images could allude to actual liturgical events of the early church, or symbolize certain important events in the life and worship of the early Christian community. Baptism and participation in the eucharistic meal not only were critical points in the communal life of early Christians, they were the liturgical signs that incorporated the deceased's hope of both the general resurrection and messianic banquet at the end of time. Thus, early Christian painting must be understood not as literal illustration, but rather as abbreviated visual references to the deeper or hidden meanings those stories or symbols held for the viewers' religious beliefs, practices, and identity.

During and after the Constantinian era, the range of subjects expanded at the same time as new iconographic themes began to decorate the walls of purpose-built churches as well as burial chambers and sarcophagi. Previously unknown depictions of Bible stories appeared in a variety of media, especially glass mosaic. Among these were Abraham hosting his three visitors, the discovery of Moses by Pharaoh's daughter, the crossing of the Red Sea, and scenes from the books of Joshua and Judges. Meanwhile, certain previously popular figures began to disappear, including the Good Shepherd, Jonah, and Noah.

Relief sculpture on sarcophagi

Many of the same iconographic motifs that appeared in paintings from the early period also appeared on the relief carvings of stone sarcophagi created for Christian patrons. Most Roman sarcophagi were lidded stone coffins and were normally designed to be placed against a wall. Usually box-shaped, but sometimes rounded like bathtubs, backs were often unfinished while the other three sides (front and the two ends), as well as the lids were decorated with relief sculpture. Only wealthy patrons could afford to bury their dead in this way and because of their great expense, sarcophagus reliefs tended to require a different level and type of craftsmanship from wall paintings. Sarcophagi were carved with drills and chisels in white marble, but occasionally also in limestone. Although they were sometimes painted, the application of color was normally restrained. In the earlier era, most sarcophagus images were portrayed on the same level or register, and by the end of the third century designs began to become more detailed, even crowded with smaller figures and multiple scenes. In the early fourth century, double-registered sarcophagi gave more structure or order to the multiple images. Despite their expense, they reflect a range of quality in skill and materials. Some feature reliefs with beautifully polished details, while others display shallower and less finely carved work, often in a lower grade of marble or softer limestone.

Like the tomb frescoes, stone sarcophagi were produced by workshops of artisans who also served a pagan clientele and adapted certain popular motifs for their Christian customers. From the fact that no two are exactly alike, it seems that the designs were customized for each client to some degree. Common to both Christians and pagans were images of shepherds milking or carrying animals over their shoulders, seated male readers, and scenes of children (*putti*) harvesting wheat or grapes. One or two extant sarcophagi from this period show that faces of a seated reader or female praying figure may have been left unfinished, possibly in the expectation that portraits of the deceased could have been added at a later time. Portraits of the deceased were frequently inserted into central shields or medallions (often of a scallop shell design).

The earliest recognizably Christian sarcophagi date to the late third century. Among the best known is the beautifully composed, so-called 'Jonah sarcophagus', now in the Museo Pio Cristiano

in the Vatican and dated to approximately 270 or 280 CE (Figure 35.4). Jonah, the central and dominant figure of this sarcophagus, appears being tossed overboard and into the mouth of the waiting sea creature, and then being spit up on dry land again where he reclines in a posture similar to depictions of sleeping Endymion of Greek legend, frequently shown in earlier Roman sarcophagi. The water in which Jonah's boat floats also supports Noah's ark and a number of fish and sea creatures being caught by anglers on a bank. The boat's mast breaks into the upper portion of the sarcophagus' frieze, which contains images of Jesus raising Lazarus and Moses striking the rock to give water to the Israelites in the wilderness.

Sarcophagi produced for Christian clients in the fourth century showed fewer of the pagan influences in their iconographic programs, and motifs became exclusively Christian in character. The shepherd, praying figure, or seated reader disappeared and their places were taken by familiar biblical images. Most of the same biblical themes that had appeared in catacomb painting found their way onto the often crowded front friezes of sarcophagi, including the most popular of the Old Testament images: Adam and Eve, Moses (or Peter) striking the rock, Abraham and Isaac, or Daniel with his lions. Comparatively more New Testament images appeared on the sarcophagi, but the standard portrayals of Jesus as healer and wonder-worker remained consistent. Alternating with images from the Hebrew Scriptures are representations of the magi bringing their gifts to the Christ child, Jesus healing (the paralytic, the man born blind, the woman with the issue of blood, etc.) and working wonders (e.g., Jesus changing water to wine at Cana, multiplying the loaves and fishes, and raising Lazarus—Figure 35.5).

However, many new iconographic themes appeared on these expensive funerary monuments in the mid fourth century. Among these new themes is Christ handing a scroll (the New Law, the *traditio legis*) to his apostles Peter and Paul (Figure 35.6). In these images, Christ either sits on a throne-like chair (sometimes with his feet resting on the head of the god, Caelus), or stands on the rock of Golgotha out of which spring the four rivers of paradise symbolizing the link between Eden and Calvary. The gesture of passing a scroll is based upon the traditional gesture of the transfer of imperial authority or power from the Roman political scene. Christ here delegates his authority to his apostles—his earthly magistrates—from his position in heaven.

Another new theme on fourth-century sarcophagi is that of Christ entering Jerusalem riding on a donkey. However, the most striking additions are scenes from the story of Christ's Passion, which is especially noteworthy because of its absence from earlier Christian art.[6]

Depictions of Jesus's crucifixion are omitted from these compositions. Images of Jesus hanging on the cross are uncommon before the fifth or sixth century. However, the episodes from Christ's Passion narrative that do appear in these compositions include Jesus' arrest, Simon of Cyrene carrying the cross, Jesus being crowned with a laurel wreath (instead of thorns), and Jesus' appearance before Pilate (Figure 35.7). In the centre niche of many so-called 'Passion sarcophagi' is an empty cross surmounted by a laurel wreath enclosing the chi-rho monogram. Below, two sleeping soldiers appear, while above their heads, perched on the arms of the cross, are two doves. The whole composition suggests triumph rather than suffering and sacrifice. In fact, the empty cross with the wreath looks very much like the Constantinian imperial insignia, or military standard, and the parallelism was probably intentional insofar as it suggests Christ's victory over death and thus the deceased's hope of resurrection.

The omission of the image of Christ's actual suffering on the cross and its substitution with an image of him standing nobly before the Roman governor, or the symbolic wreathed sign of victory, may arise from a desire to emphasize the triumph of resurrection rather than the pathos of Christ's suffering and death. Theological writings from the same period explore the redemptive significance of Christ's death on the cross and offer a range of theories from Christ as victor over Satan to Christ as substitutionary sacrifice for human sin. Nevertheless, graphic depictions of the crucifixion appear to have been avoided, possibly because the image was too disturbing or the subject too holy. The image of Abraham offering Isaac occasionally appears to have been inserted in its place, as a type

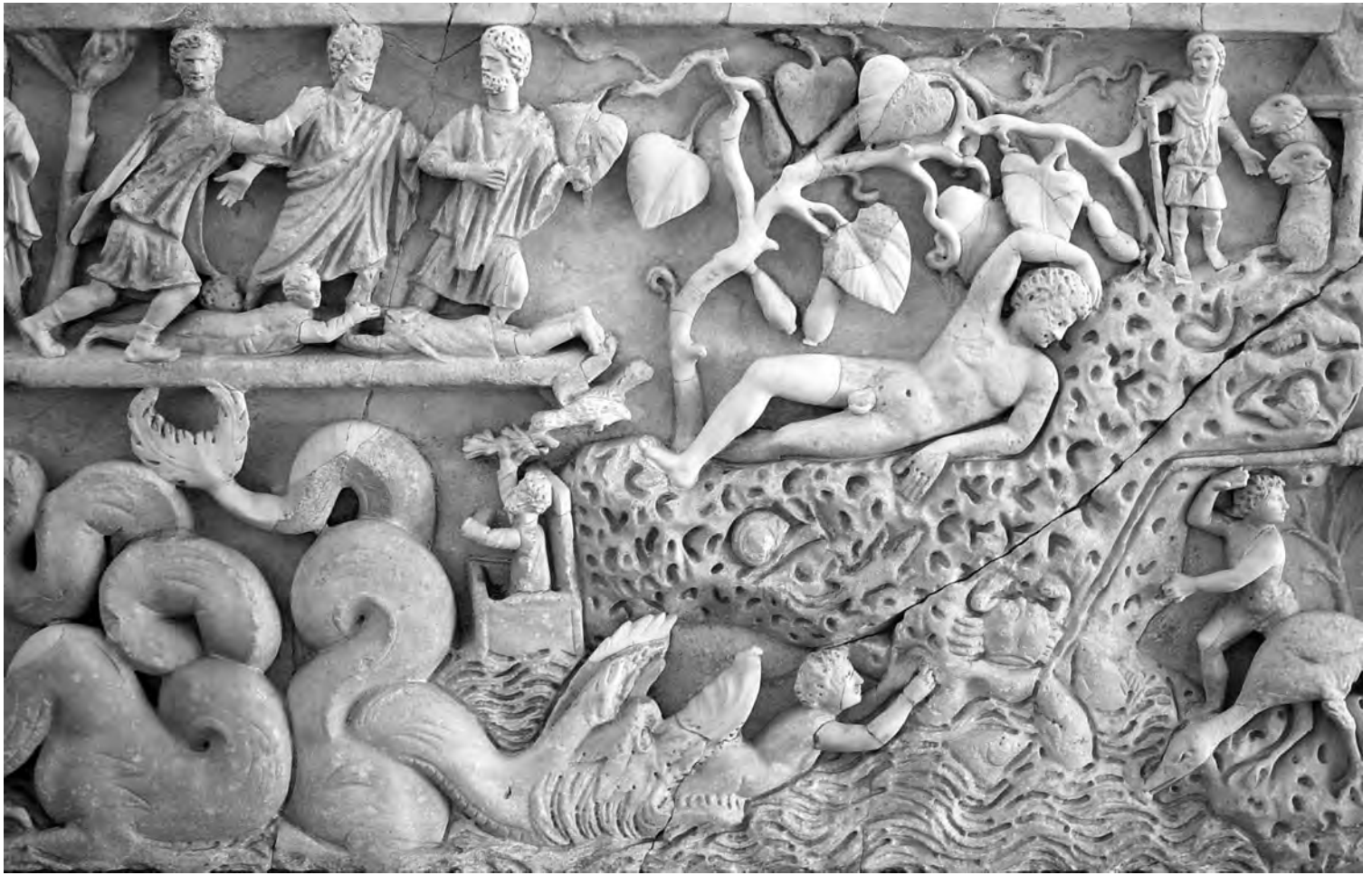

Figure 35.4 Jonah cycle from the late third century so-called 'Jonah sarcophagus' in the Museo Pio Cristiano, Vatican; photo Robin Jensen

Figure 35.5 Double-registered mid fourth-century sarcophagus of the 'Two Brothers,' with various Old and New Testament scenes in the Museo Pio Cristiano, Vatican; photo Robin Jensen

Figure 35.6 Late fourth-century sarcophagus showing Christ giving the *traditio legis* to Peter and Paul, now in Musée de l'Arles; photo Robin Jensen

Figure 35.7 Passion sarcophagus, third quarter fourth century, from the Vatican Museo Pio Cristiano; photo Robin Jensen

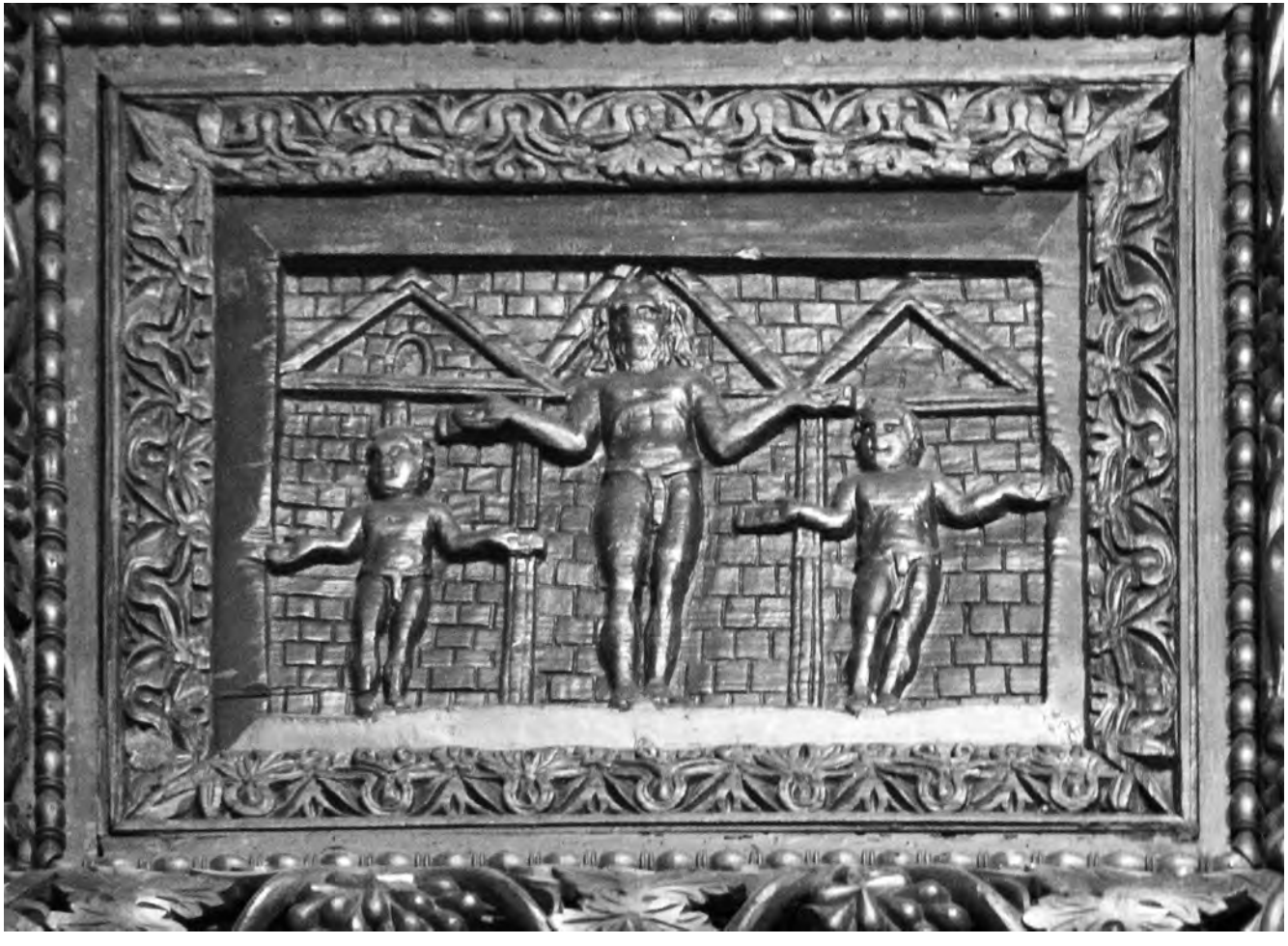

Figure 35.8 Crucifixion. Wooden panel from the door of Basilica of Santa Sabina, Rome, *c.* 420–430; photo Robin Jensen

of the crucifixion, while at other times, the scene is simply passed over altogether. One of the first indisputable images of Christ's crucifixion occurs on a small ivory box now in the British Museum (*c.* 420); another appears on the wooden doors of Rome's Basilica of Santa Sabina (*c.* 420–430 Figure 35.8). Crucifixion portrayals start to appear more frequently in the sixth century, a development that chronologically coincides with an increase of pilgrimage to the Holy Land, in particular to visit the Holy Sepulchre and the site of Calvary in Jerusalem. Some of the earliest such images were imprinted on souvenirs that travelers brought home from their visits to these holy places.

The implications of this iconographic shift during the fourth century, shown so clearly on the sarcophagi of the period, are several. First the presentations of Jesus in scenes of his Passion, as resurrected and enthroned, and as giver of the New Law, show a definite shift from an earlier artistic stress on Jesus as healer, teacher, or wonder-worker. Moreover, these new images are more dogmatic in nature and less consistently based in scriptural narratives. The imagery thus emphasizes Jesus' character as divine judge, heavenly lord, and redeemer, more than the events of his earthly ministry: healing, teaching, and working wonders.

Changing social or political circumstances may explain this shift away from the earlier scripturally oriented images toward those with more dogmatic emphases. Often the shift in Christianity's status and imperial patronage has been cited to explain representations of Christ as an enthroned heavenly king, sometimes with his feet placed upon the mantle of the god of the heavens, Caelus. Historians have long presumed these images had political significance and were even forms of imperial propaganda. To the extent that representations of Christ as ruler of the cosmos paralleled depictions of the Roman emperor as ruler of the earthly realm, they thereby confirmed him as a divinely ordained and empowered agent of God. This hypothesis has been re-examined and refined in recent decades. Some scholars have challenged the idea that fourth-century art was primarily captive to imperial interests and have pointed out the similarities of Christ in this iconography with the ruling pagan gods, Jupiter and Dionysus in particular. As Christianity transitioned from a persecuted sect to the official religion of the state, images of the pagan gods were replaced with images of Christ, sometimes shown in remarkably similar guise. Others have argued that presenting Christ as enthroned ruler challenged the previous emperor cult by showing Christ as the ultimate king of kings and lord of lords. Thus many of the new dogmatic themes of fourth-century painting and sculpture might refer to the triumph and power of the Christian God and Christian teachings over the traditional—but dying—Roman pantheon.

A related—but somewhat different—explanation for the fourth century's changing iconographic motifs is their shift from a private, funerary context to a public and monumental venue. Enormous sums of money were required to erect grand buildings and decorate them. They were intended to impress and catechize the masses of both local congregants and visiting pilgrims. The art in these spaces was not commissioned to console the bereaved, or to reflect the personal beliefs and hopes of individual Christians, but rather to express the glory, as well as the faith, of the church triumphant. Just as on the sarcophagi, many favorite scriptural images and sacramental motifs remained, but through the fourth through sixth centuries new themes adorned church apses and arches: representations of a majestic Christ, ruling and giving the New Law, and saints receiving their crowns. One of the earliest examples is the apse mosaic of Santa Pudenziana in Rome (*c.* 400), which depicts Christ enthroned among his apostles against the backdrop of the New Jerusalem. Female personifications of the churches of the Jews and the Gentiles offer crowns to Rome's founding apostles, Peter and Paul. A gemmed cross rises above and dominates the upper part of the scene and is flanked by the four living creatures from the Book of Revelation (see Figure 35.9).

Sculpture in the round

Few examples of early Christian sculpture in the round exist, which suggests that Christians were less inclined to this medium of art than either painting or relief carving. This form of art may have been most closely associated with pagan idolatry and the imperial cult, and thus shunned as a form of

Figure 35.9 The apse in Santa Pudenziana, Rome; photo Robin Jensen

Figure 35.10 Good Shepherd statuette, Vatican Museo Pio Cristiano; photo Robin Jensen

decorative or funerary art by Christian clients. Nevertheless, a few significant examples of sculpture have been assumed to have Christian associations and dated between the third and seventh centuries, in particular a number of third- and fourth-century Good Shepherd statuettes (Figure 35.10).

A series of small sculptures, whose provenance is unknown and are therefore usually referred to as the 'Cleveland marbles' (because they are now housed in the Cleveland Museum of Art), include figures of the Good Shepherd as well as four statues of Jonah (Jonah swallowed, cast up again, reclining under the vine, and standing in prayer). Dated to the late third century on stylistic grounds, these pieces are thought to have come from a family tomb in Asia Minor.

Other rare examples of early Christian sculpture include depictions of St. Peter holding a cross, and a seated figure that has frequently been identified as Christ teaching. Although the existence of these artifacts demonstrates that Christians tolerated a certain amount of sculpture in the round, supporting textual evidence also survives. Eusebius of Caesarea referred to a bronze statue representing

Jesus and the woman with the issue of blood that had been set up near the gates of her alleged home in Caesarea Philippi, as well as bronze images of Daniel and the Good Shepherd which decorated fountains in Constantinople (*Ecclesiastical History* 7.18; *Life of Constantine* 3.49). The *Liber Pontificalis* similarly describes statuary given by Constantine to adorn the church he constructed at the Lateran along with its baptistery, which was said to include seven silver stags, a golden lamb, and nearly life-sized figures of Christ and John the Baptist (*Book of the Popes* 34.9, 13 (Sylvester)). Although none of these figures has survived (allowing some doubt about their historicity), such texts give testimony to the inclination to identify particular pilgrimage sites or to beautify church settings with statues—an inclination consistent with Roman tradition and décor.

Mosaics and ivory carving

Even as the iconographic themes and settings of Christian art changed, many traditional motifs were carried over and some popular themes remained. Thus the end of catacomb painting in the fourth century did not put an end to narrative iconography in general, but only to certain themes that seem to have belonged to an earlier era. Christian art still continued to employ scripture-based imagery, even as both new and old biblical images appeared on the walls of church buildings, on small ivory diptychs or Gospel book covers, or in early illuminated manuscripts. For example, the early fifth-century mosaic panels along the nave of the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore (*c.* 432–440), and those from a century later in the upper nave of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna (*c.* 493–525), continue to present traditional biblical motifs along with innovative ones. The basilica at Santa Maria Maggiore was adorned with an impressive cycle of Old Testament images in mosaic, especially with scenes from the books of Exodus and Joshua. Among the twenty-seven (of an original forty-two) surviving images are scenes from Moses' life, including Moses with Pharaoh's daughter, Moses' marriage to Zipporah, and the battle with the Amalekites. Included among the New Testament scenes found in the basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo are depictions of Christ separating the sheep from the goats, Jesus calling Peter and Andrew to be 'fishers of men,' Jesus with his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, and Jesus on the Emmaus Road.

Ivory plaques, book covers, boxes designed to hold consecrated bread, and reliquary caskets also contain small narrative images, many of which were common in catacomb or sarcophagus iconography. Although most Christian ivory carving is dated from the fifth century, the craft was well established in Rome from the second century on and used for luxurious items of every kind from beds to combs. Hinged ivory tablets known as diptychs were used in the Christian liturgy to hold lists of names of saints, bishops, or important church dignitaries. The leaves of these diptychs as well as other ivory objects, including Gospel book covers, and even a bishop's chair, were decorated with carved images of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the saints and with episodes from the lives or with narrative scenes from biblical stories (Figure 35.11).

Ivory carving was used for small pieces and had a kind of intimacy unlike works intended for public view. By contrast, from the fourth to the sixth centuries, mosaic decoration of churches became one of the most important and beautiful modes of Christian artistic expression on a large scale. As with ivory carving, mosaic decoration did not originate with Christian art, however. The use of decorative mosaics for both walls and floors was widespread in the ancient Mediterranean world, and workshops of skilled artisans merely needed to adapt well-practiced techniques to a new program of images. A few wall and floor mosaics with Christian themes or from Christian contexts are known to date from the pre-Constantinian or very early Constantinian era, and have been discovered in church buildings as well as in funerary contexts. One of the best known of the latter is the mosaic found in the so-called 'tomb of the Julii' (or mausoleum M) under St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, which has been roughly dated to the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century. This tomb includes images of a fisher and Jonah, but the most famous is the ceiling mosaic that presents Christ in the guise of the sun-god (Sol Invictus), complete with radiate halo and riding in a chariot drawn by four

Figure 35.11 Early Christian ivory panel; now in Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum; photo Wikimedia Creative Commons (photo Andreas Praefcke—own work, public domain, all rights released: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reidersche_Tafel_c_400_AD.jpg)

white horses. Such an image, clearly a conflation of a pagan image with the Christian savior, clearly was intentional—to illustrate an aspect of Christ's divinity (i.e., the light of the world or the 'sun of righteousness' from Malachi 4), or to signal Christ's superseding the pagan gods. Grape vines surround this figure. A common decorative motif in Roman art, here they may have alluded to the text of John, 'I am the true vine' (John 15:1).

Another example of early mosaic decoration exists in an early double church in Aquileia, Italy. The newer church dates to the early fourth century and may barely pre-date Constantine; the older

(north) church building may have been constructed some decades earlier. Both of the churches' floors have elaborate mosaic pavements. The mosaic motifs in the older building may have been part of a pre-existing building on the site and display religiously neutral images of birds and animals while the floor of the newer edifice is clearly Christian in its symbolism. Among its panels are several scenes from the Jonah story as well as a representation of the Good Shepherd.

Mosaics were used to decorate both ceilings and floors of Christian churches in the fourth century, all across the Roman empire, from Britain to North Africa and from Spain to Syria. Archeologists discovered an unusual portrait of Christ on the central medallion of a floor mosaic in a late fourth-century Christian building in Dorset at Hinton Saint Mary (now in the British Museum). This portrait shows Christ as beardless and wrapped in a pallium, A chi-rho monogram stands behind his head, and pomegranates fill the field to the right and left.[7] The rest of the pavement displays personifications of the four seasons and hunting scenes. Adjacent is a small room whose floor mosaic includes scenes from the pagan myth of Bellerophon killing the Chimera, arguably an allusion to the idea of Christ overcoming Satan.

Mosaics began decorating the vaulted ceilings and apses of Christian churches in the mid fourth century, in conjunction with the Constantinian building program. Among the earliest examples, the mosaic program found in the round mausoleum of Constantine's daughter, Constantina (now known as the Church of Santa Costanza), include twining grape vines and harvesting cupids, bird, flowers, and portrait busts of Constantina herself. In contrast with decorative and probably religiously neutral motifs, however, are two apse mosaics in the ambulatory that show images of Christ with his apostles, Peter and Paul. These two mosaic portraits present two strikingly different presentations of Christ. In one, Jesus is represented as youthful and fair, (beardless, with light hair and eyes). In the other apse mosaic, an older, bearded and darker-skinned Christ is seated on the orb of the world as if on a throne, and his expression is solemn and regal. These latter two mosaics may postdate the floral and harvesting motifs by twenty years or more, and show the transition from a generic Roman décor to a more specific Christian iconographic program.

Although the churches of Santa Maria Maggiore and Sant'Apollinare Nuovo continue to show biblical narrative images in their nave mosaic panels, the medium of mosaic was applied most effectively to the apse and dome mosaics that generally emphasized the theological or dogmatic images of Christ transfigured, resurrected, or giving the Law. Typical of these are the early fifth-century apse of Santa Pudenziana (*c.* 400–420), which shows Christ ruling from the Heavenly Jerusalem (Figure 35.9), or Santi Cosma e Damiano (*c.* 540), which presents Christ standing in a darkened sky, wearing a golden tunic, surrounded by apostles and saints holding out their martyrs' crowns to their Lord.

The presentation of crowns is repeated in several places in Ravenna (the western capital of the Byzantine empire in the fifth and sixth centuries), in the church of Sant'Apollonare Nuovo, and in the famous mosaic-covered domes of the two baptisteries in that city—the Neonian baptistery (of the Orthodox, 400–450) and the baptistery of the Arians (*c.* 495–500). Apostles or martyrs processing with jeweled wreaths present a solemn, hieratic, and suggestively liturgical procession (Figure 35.12). These scenes have some resonance with ancient rituals in which lesser nobility pay homage to their newly crowned king.

A few years later, the designers of the mosaic decoration for Ravenna's jewel-like church of San Vitale (526–547) included two imperial processions of liturgical gifts. One shows the emperor Justinian, his courtiers, and the bishop with his deacons bearing the eucharistic bread. The other depicts the empress, Theodora, with her ladies in waiting, preparing to bring in the chalice.

The focal point of the chancel (or presbyterium) in San Vitale is the altar where the bishop would have presided over the eucharistic sacrifice. Above the altar the viewer sees a dominating image of Christ enthroned on the orb of the world, and below the apse are the offertory processions of Justinian and Theodora. Directly above the altar itself, on either side, is a different kind of liturgical commentary in mosaic—representations of biblical types for eucharistic offering or Christ's sacrifice. On one side Melchizedek (drawing on the text of Hebrews 7) and Abel present their offerings,

Figure 35.12 Medallion from the early fifth-century dome mosaic, Arian baptistery, Ravenna; photo Robin Jensen

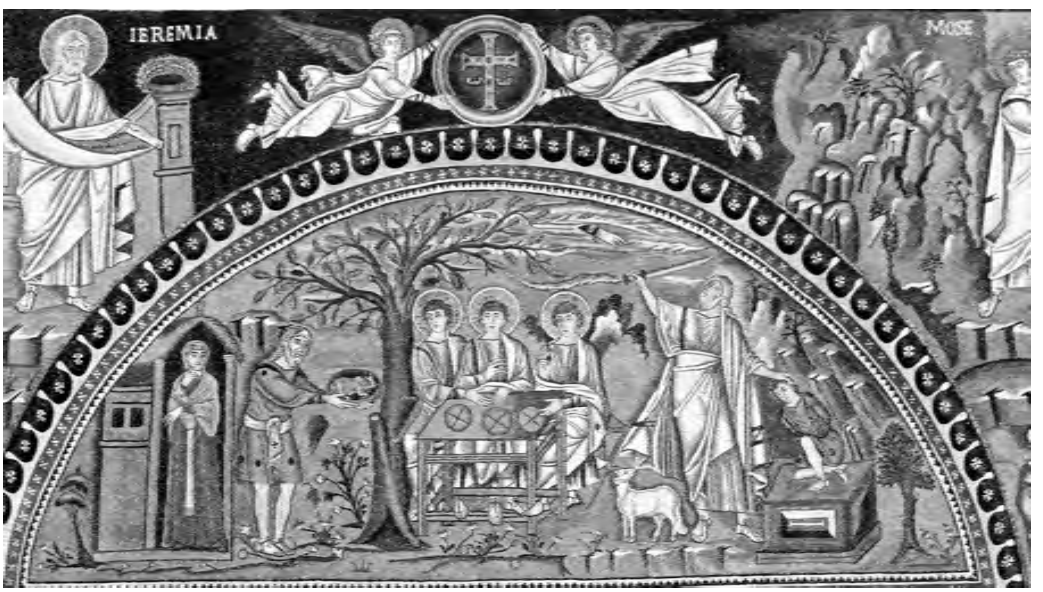

Figure 35.13 Lunette mosaic of Abraham and Isaac from San Vitale, Ravenna, late fifth century; photo Robin Jensen

standing on either side of a cloth-draped table that must have looked strikingly similar to the draped altar below. Directly across the chancel and at the same level of vision are two scenes of Abraham combined into one composition, the first showing Abraham serving his three visitors, and the second showing Abraham about to offer Isaac upon a flaming altar (Figure 35.13). The imagery and the liturgy here are in perfect harmony—the first non-verbally referring to and interpreting the language, actions, and symbols of the second.

Manuscript illumination

In contrast to the monumental character of the mosaics installed in the great churches of the empire, manuscript illuminations were small images preserved and cherished in the codices of the scriptures or Gospel books, which were kept on the ambo or altar, or in church treasuries when they were not in use. Beginning in the second century, the parchment codex (a bound book with separate leaves) replaced the scroll as the primary form of the book, particularly for Christians (Jews continued to use scrolls), and very gradually these codices began to be illuminated with miniature paintings. Some of these manuscripts are illustrated with full-page images, while others combine text with illuminations. The paint used for this work was egg tempera, often accented by silver or gold inks, sometimes on purple-stained parchment, underscoring the great value of the book itself.

The oldest known illuminated Christian manuscript was discovered at the monastery of Quedlingburg. The *Quedlingburg Itala* (so named for its place of discovery and because it contained a portion of the Old Latin Bible), dates to the early fifth century and consists of five leaves from the books of Samuel and Kings. Historians have assumed this work was produced in a Roman scriptorium that also served pagan clients because of its compositional similarities to a contemporary illuminated manuscript of the Aeneid (the *Vergilius Vaticanus*). Such cooperation and adaptation demonstrates the continued adaptation of Christian themes by artisans who were the inheritors of an already established tradition and highly developed craft.

The direct proximity of text and image, however, encouraged the continuing development of narrative art, particularly in sequenced cycles that represent the details of the text fairly literally. The abbreviated, sketchy, and symbolic images of the earlier catacomb frescoes are supplanted here by intent to directly illustrate the story. The four illustrated leaves of the Quedlinburg Itala show four scenes on three of its pages and two on another, each representing a relatively small detail of a story in the accompanying columns of text. Calculating that some of these manuscripts had fifty or sixty pages, the volume of artistic work must have been substantial and quite impressive in its richness and detail.

Surviving illuminated manuscripts from the sixth century include codices with fragments of the Pentateuch, particularly the book of Genesis (the *Cotton Genesis* and the *Vienna Genesis*) as well as portions of the Gospels (the *Gospel of Augustine*, the *Rossano Gospels*, and the *Rabbula Codex*). Originating in all parts of the empire, including Egypt and Syria, and Constantinople. The *Vienna Genesis*, perhaps the most beautiful and most complete of these early manuscripts (having forty-eight existing leaves), was executed in the early sixth century on purple parchment, suggesting that it was made for a member of the imperial family. One of the most impressive of the miniatures in this codex is the presentation of the flood, which differs in almost every possible way from the image of Noah in his ark found in catacomb painting or sarcophagus carving. Here, the ark, shown as a boat with a double-decker cabin, barely floats in a dark blue swirling sea in which people and animals are struggling but drowning. Another remarkable miniature from the *Vienna Genesis* is that of Rebecca and Eliezer at the well, from Genesis 24 (see Figure 35.14).

The *Rossano Gospels* (named for the Italian city to which the book was brought) are made up of excerpts from the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, and illustrate a series of episodes in the life of Christ, including several healings, the raising of Lazarus, and Christ's arrest and trial before Pilate. The image of Christ raising Lazarus is filled with narrative detail, even showing the onlookers holding their noses

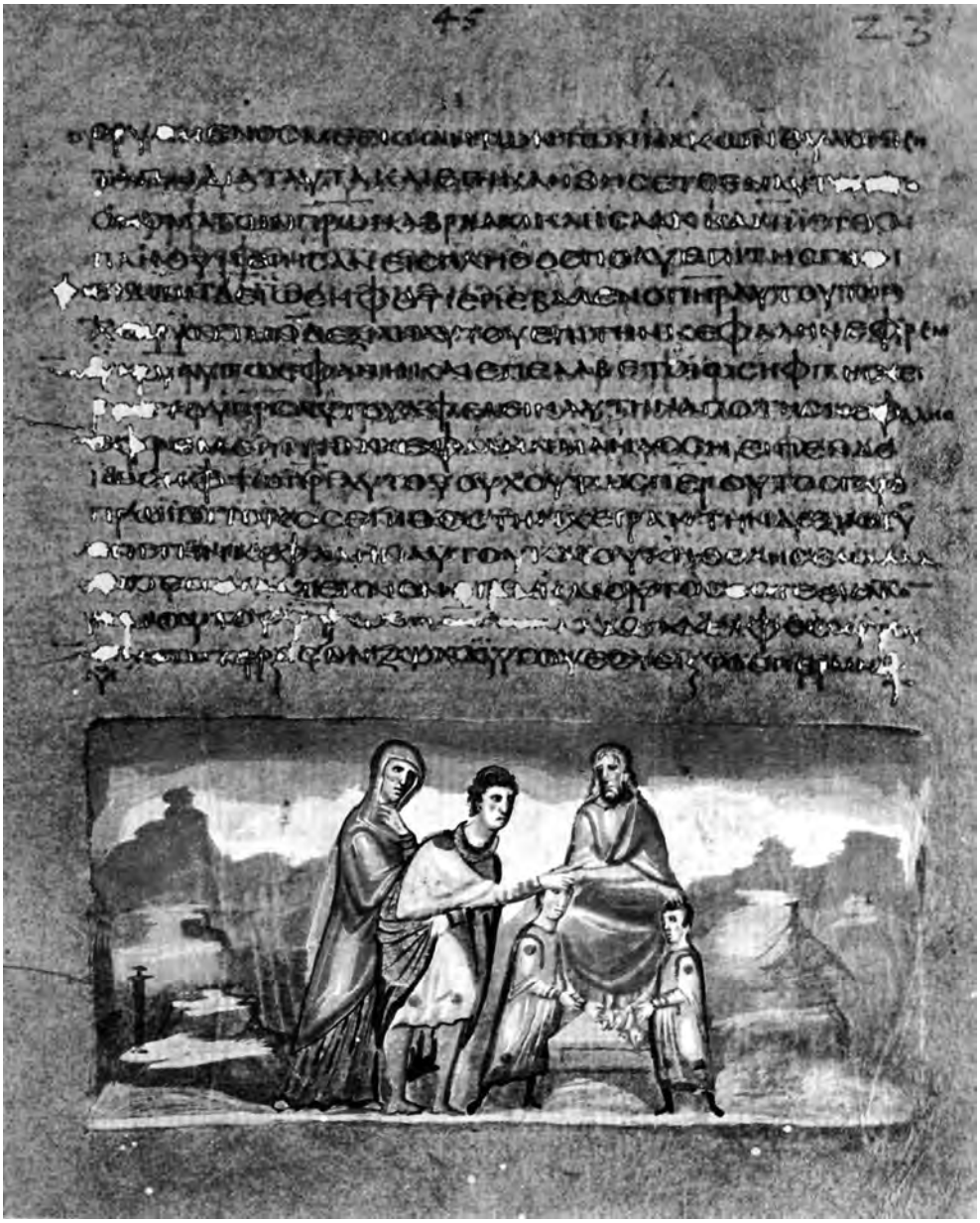

Figure 35.14 Rebecca and Eliezer at the well from the *Vienna Genesis*; photo: Wikimedia Creative Commons https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ViennaGenesisPict45BlessingEphraimManasseh.jpg

for fear of the stench coming from the tomb. The trial scene of Jesus before Pilate is shown in two parts: Christ first appearing before Pilate, and Pilate asking the people to choose between Barabbas and Jesus. The background of these scenes presents what was probably a typical sixth-century court interior, populated with officials, scribes, and Roman guards.

The *Rabbula Codex* is extremely important in the history of Christian art, if for no other reason than that it contains one of the earliest extant images of the crucifixion. Originating in Mesopotamia, but probably based on iconographic models in Palestine, the cycle of images suggests a visit of

pilgrims to the sacred shrines of the Holy Land. Certain topographical details—particularly in the representation of the crucifixion itself—not only lend a concrete literalism to the image but suggest that the creators of the prototype had a familiarity with that particular landscape. Like the mosaic processions and offerings in the churches of Ravenna, which represented or commented upon actual liturgical events, here art works draw upon what was known about actual spaces and geography to conflate image with reality and history with sacred narrative.

Other artworks

Christians also produced an entire range of smaller objects, both personal and private in character or communal and liturgical. Jewelry (cameos and signet rings), furniture, domestic ware (silver spoons or caskets, pottery lamps, bowls, or glass bowls and cups) as well as liturgical implements including reliquaries, incense burners, lamps, chalices, flagons, and patens constitute a large corpus of important objects for historians of Christian art. Pilgrimage tokens and reliquaries made of pottery, lead, enameled metal or wood were painted or stamped with images of events corresponding to particular sites in the Holy Land. Even coins, bearing Christian legends or details of reverse imagery, are a record of the way faith is made visual in daily life. Whether part of a church's treasury or primarily designed for personal and private use, these goods often are hardly distinguishable from common, everyday items, and their function or Christian character is evident only in their physical context or small design details. An ordinary drinking cup could have been used for a eucharistic chalice or a serving plate for a paten.

Depending on their base material, some of these items have survived better than others. Metal and glass remains endure better than textiles or wooden objects. Most of the textiles were garments, altar cloths, or curtains and made of linen or wool that bore Christian symbols or occasionally more elaborate Christian imagery, including images of the Virgin and the saints. The best preserved of these textiles come from Egypt, where the arid climate helped to preserve them.

Conclusion

Although Christian theologians at various times worried about the problem of idolatry and may have tried to enforce restrictions on Christian use of artistic imagery, in practical application Christians were making and using art, probably even from the first generations, although those images have not survived or been identified as definitively Christian. But, taking care not to fall into idolatry, Christians used visual images as identity with community, to enhance their worship, to inspire or educate, to aid devotion, or even to give honor to God and the saints. Not to be confused with those who actually worshipped cult statues or mistook them for living (and circumscribed) realities, Christians might respect or even give homage to a symbol or image without mistaking the mundane elements of wood, paint, or stone for the divine presence itself. Thus what at first appears as a difference between the official theological stance and popular practice, may be more properly a careful definition of form and function.

Several characteristics of Christian art emerge and appear to be foundational. First, early Christian art was almost always linked (either directly or indirectly) to narrative, as found in the sacred texts (or stories)—either the Hebrew Scriptures or the Christian Gospels. In the earliest days, these texts were, however, more illuminated than illustrated. The art works were shorthand references to familiar stories already interpreted and given secondary significance in the life of the community, its liturgy, its faith, and its present circumstances. Certain stories were more popular for representation, were particular favorites, and were represented in a kind of modified shorthand form, only to call the viewer's attention. The rest existed in memory. Only later, when the illuminations were absolutely juxtaposed with text, did the images become more faithfully narrative, but even these were interpretations of the key points and meanings contained in the accompanying texts.

A second characteristic of Christian art is its role in transmitting tradition, whether through instruction, or through the creation of sacred image and space and the formation of a kind of visual spirituality. Christian art was the work of the community, perhaps guided by church authorities and patronized by the wealthy, the aristocracy, or even the emperor, but even so, viewed by a wide range of spectators and eventually on full public display. To this end, Christian art had to be innovative with respect to its surrounding culture; it needed to visually reflect a new religious identity and to draw community around a group of core images or symbols that were its own, even if drawn from earlier traditions or prototypes. As the community grew and changed, so did the art that depicted its practices, beliefs, and values. Although the message of visual art did not necessarily coincide with so-called orthodox positions, it existed within the same context as other modes of expressing the core components of the faith: homilies, hymns, prayers, biblical commentaries, and even theological treatises. While not subservient to written texts, works of art shared many of their methods and purposes.

A third characteristic of Christian art is that it functioned both symbolically and socially. Visual art never merely illustrated texts or simply reinforced theological propositions; it encompassed and reflected the content and meaning of the faith in ways that transcended verbal expression. Whether simple and sketchy, or majestic and monumental, the art of the early church expressed the beliefs and hopes of those who belonged to the community in figures or signs that were effective for shaping and maintaining both personal and social identity. For those who used them regularly, the materials and contents of art required little explanation. Their messages were direct even if difficult to verbalize. Over time those symbols changed, primarily because the community evolved, expanded, or understood itself in new terms. Different aspects of the faith would come to the fore and find their expression in visual form. Each of these developments was keyed to changing theological emphases as well as shifts in the social, cultural, and political circumstances of the church, and each shift was mirrored in other aspects of Christian life, such as liturgy, theological writings, and institutional structures.

Notes

1 For example, see the standard argument in Chadwick 1967: 277–8, and by such prominent art historians as Kitzinger 1977: 3; and a helpful summary of the modern scholarship in Finney 1994: 7–12. See also Finney 1994: 99–145 (chapter 5), for his critique of other arguments for early Christian aniconism, including a presumption that the earliest Christians were more 'spiritual' or 'otherwordly' than their pagan neighbors than later Christian art-users.

2 Murray (1977) summarizes the early Patristic sources on this subject, as well as their use in the later iconoclastic controversy. Most of these ancient texts have appeared in collections including that of Koch (1917).

3 The identification of this art as reflecting imperial styles and motifs has been challenged by Mathews (1999) and more recently discussed in Jefferson and Jensen (2015).

4 For a discussion of the Lazarus imagery in the catacombs, arguing that the early Christians of Rome interpreted the raising of Lazarus from the dead in John 11 as prefiguring the resurrection of the believer and not of Jesus, see Esler and Piper 2006: 131–45.

5 For discussion and elaboration of these arguments, see Weitzmann (1971), Weitzmann and Kessler (1990), and Kogman-Appel (1999).

6 For discussion of the lateness of the crucifixion iconography, see Harley (2006), Jensen (2007), and Longenecker (2015).

7 Some viewers have proposed this might be a portrait of Constantine, based on his hairstyle and lack of beard as well as the prominent christogram behind his head.

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36
MUSIC

John Arthur Smith

The musical context of early Christianity

The concept and idiom of music

The concept of 'music' and the idiom of the music itself were very different in the cultures of Mediterranean and Near Eastern antiquity compared with modern Western and Western-influenced cultures (Foley 1996: 5–6). It is therefore appropriate to begin by considering the conceptual and phenomenological aspects of music in those ancient cultures in order to approach an understanding of 'music' as the early Christians are likely to have known it.[1]

The concept of music

The concept of music implied by musical references in the Hebrew Bible (HB), the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek New Testament (NT) and their related apocryphal, deuterocanonical, extracanonical and pseudepigraphical writings, shows no awareness of organised sound as an independent discrete aural phenomenon, the form, content and performance of which could be appreciated for their own sake. Neither is there any awareness of organised sound alone as a vehicle for the expression of human emotions. For the writers of those ancient texts, organised sound was an integral part of various types of human activity which in themselves were not 'musical' in the modern Western sense. The pertinent types of activity might be functional (directing, signalling and warning), symbolic (ritual action), verbal (uttered liturgy, poetry, prophecy and prose) or performative (dance and drama). This concept of music was prevalent throughout the Near East in antiquity, as many ancient written and iconographic sources show.[2] The concept of music as witnessed in the Bible and early Christian literature is aptly illustrated by the taunt (ostensibly uttered by children) given in the NT: 'We piped for you and you would not dance, we wailed for you and you would not mourn' (Matt. 11:17), and by the ring dance with its accompanying responsive song (ostensibly uttered by Jesus and his apostles) the text of which is given in the apocryphal *Acts of John* 94–96 and hints (in 95) at the use of the pipe: 'Grace dances. "I [Jesus] will pipe, Dance, all of you"' (*NTApoc* 2: 182). Dance in conjunction with song is perhaps implied in a passage from *Symposium, or On Virginity* by Methodius of Olympus, a Christian writer of the late third to early fourth century CE:

> Thecla stood in the midst of the virgins at the right hand of Arete and she sang beautifully; the rest stood together in a circle like the shape of a chorus, and responded to her: 'I keep myself pure for you, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet you'.
>
> *(Methodius,* Symposion e peri hagneias*,* Oratio *11,* Cap. *2; PG 18: 207–14; SC 95: 309–21; McGowan 2014: 130–1)*

In the Mediterranean lands and the ancient Near East there was a widespread belief that the sound of certain musical instruments and instrumental noise possessed magical powers to ward off underworld demons and their malevolent designs. This represented a further functional activity associated with the sound of instruments. Sounding the instruments would banish chthonic influences and bring peace to troubled human souls. It is this belief in the apotropaic power of instrumental sound that lies behind the narratives of the young David playing a lyre to calm the troubled Saul (1 Sam. 16:16–23; 18:10), Elijah calling for a musician (probably a lyrist) to play as he prophesied (2 Kgs. 3:15–16), and Job playing the psaltery to calm his troublesome female servants (*Testament of Job* 14.4). In devout Christian circles, belief in the apotropaic power of the sound of instruments was frowned upon as a superstition of the faithless: invocation of the name of Jesus alone could banish evil (Quasten 1983: 15–17; Görg and Botterweck 1995).

In Hellenistic culture the concept was similar to that described above except that it also admitted the idea of organised sound as a discrete phenomenon. The Hellenisation of the Near East in the fourth and third centuries BCE inevitably brought with it the Greek concept of music, which eventually became predominant. Nevertheless, as will become apparent as this chapter progresses, the biblical and ancient Near Eastern concept of music remained in place alongside the Greek, especially in religious contexts where individual competitive prowess in vocal or instrumental performance would have been inappropriate. Interestingly, biblical Hebrew and Aramaic have no word that means 'music' in the modern sense; and although the Greek word *mousikē* (from which the English word 'music' is derived) is used in the LXX and related ancient literature in Greek, it always implies or refers to a combination of organised sound and one or other type of human activity (Smith 2011: xvii, 150–1).

The idiom of music

The musical idiom – the sound of the music itself – is elusive. There are no extant remains of musical notation or technical descriptions of music from either the ancient Israelites, the ancient Arabs, the ancient Egyptians, the early Jews or the earliest Christians. It therefore seems reasonable to suppose that their musical traditions were transmitted orally and never committed to writing. Despite the lack of actual musical remains from those sections of Mediterranean and Near Eastern society just mentioned, there are aspects of Hellenistic, northwest Syrian and Babylonian musical traditions which may be important for an appreciation of the musical idiom, or idioms, prevalent in the Mediterranean and Near Eastern lands in antiquity.

Among the many achievements of the ancient Greeks was their early development of a system of musical notation, examples of which have been preserved and can be reasonably accurately transcribed.[3] One such example is a substantial fragment of a late third-century CE papyrus manuscript from Oxyrhynchus in Upper Egypt, which bears the closing 30 or so words of a freely composed Trinitarian hymn in Greek (see Figure 36.1). The text of the 'Oxyrhynchus hymn' (as it is popularly known) is set to a melody written in Greek musical notation.

Comparison with the music of extant non-Christian Greek hymns from late antiquity shows the musical style of the Oxyrhynchus hymn to be very similar in so far as the word underlay is for the most part syllabic, long and short syllables in the text are usually set to long and short notes respectively, the rhythm of text and music is generally regular (predominantly anapaestic in the Oxyrhynchus hymn),

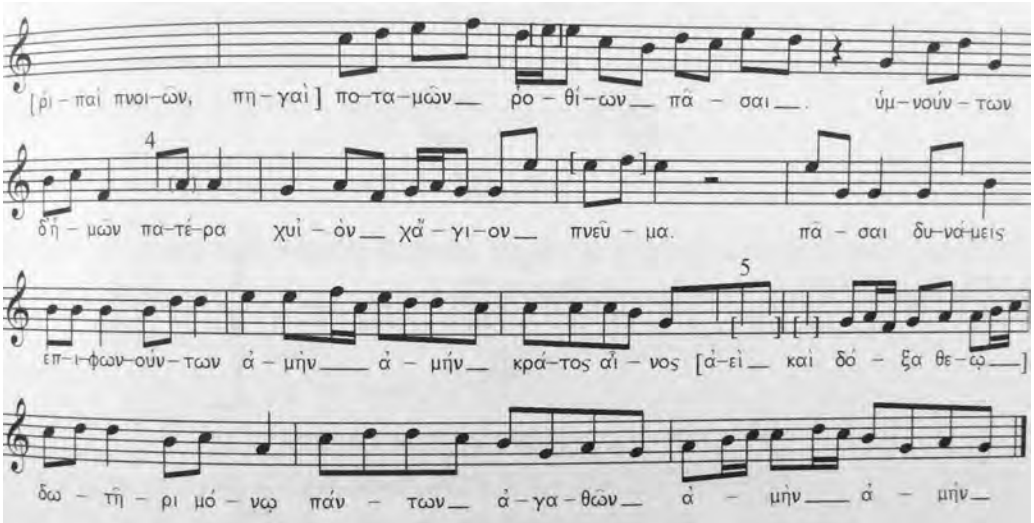

Figure 36.1 The Oxyrhynchus hymn (P. Oxy. XV 1786), *c.* 275 CE. Transcription of lines 3–5. Reproduced from Cosgrove 2011: 93, by permission of Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen

and the melodic style is varied (Smith 2011: 214–15; detailed study: Cosgrove 2011). Published transcriptions of the music of the Oxyrhynchus hymn vary in their details (e.g. West 1992: 324–5; Cosgrove 2011: 92–3), but the characteristics listed above apply to all of them.

The Oxyrhynchus hymn attests to the early use of a Hellenistic hymnic musical idiom in a Christian context. But while the hymn seems to point to the existence of a Hellenistic, or Hellenistic-influenced, early Christian musical idiom, there are caveats. To begin with, as an example of early Christian music, the Oxyrhynchus hymn stands alone, isolated from other examples both chronologically and geographically; the closest extant examples of transcribable Christian musical notation have a ninth-century Frankish provenance. It is therefore impossible to know to what extent the musical style was typical of Christian hymns elsewhere in the late third century CE (although it is probably reasonable to suppose that the style was similar in areas where Greek culture was predominant). Second, the hymn is an example of only one genre. It provides no clues to the musical idiom employed for rendering biblical texts or liturgy. Under the circumstances, the Oxyrhynchus hymn, although of considerable interest in itself, is of limited value in the quest for the musical idiom of Christian antiquity (compare Cosgrove 2011: 150–1).

Northwest Syrian and Babylonian musical cultures also had long traditions of notated music, spanning well over a thousand years from approximately the eighteenth to at least the fourth centuries BCE. The pertinent extant documents are written in cuneiform script impressed into soft clay tablets which were then baked hard. They are written in a variety of as yet imperfectly understood languages and dialects (Dumbrill 2005: 22); some tablets are in a poor state of preservation. There is sometimes considerable scholarly disagreement about their interpretation.

Two groups of tablets are significant. One, consisting of items from a broad area of Babylonian influence in the ancient Near East, contains technical information about the tuning of the seven-stringed (and perhaps in some instances nine-stringed) Babylonian lyre (West 1994; Dumbrill 2005: 11–110). The other, consisting of some 29 more or less complete items and approximately 40 small fragments from around 1400 to 1200 BCE, unearthed at Ugarit, contains mostly religious texts in the Hurrian language (the so-called 'Hurrian hymns' or 'Hurrian songs'), and a complex system of

abbreviated instructions for realising the pitched sounds associated with them (West 1994; Dumbrill 2005: 111–74).[4]

The two groups of tablets are in broad agreement about the tonal features and structural elements of the music; the music they represent clearly belongs to one and the same sound-world. With regard to tonal features, there seems to be a preference for intervals said to be 'fourths' and 'fifths', although whether they would have sounded like the present-day intervals is not known since precise pitches cannot be determined. There seems to have been no sense of a tonal hierarchy of pitches in a succession of pitched sounds (unlike, for example, modern major and minor scales).[5] The tuning patterns of lyres were normative throughout the ancient Near East over an extended period of time. It is possible that the cultic and court musicians of Israel/Palestine were acquainted with them and used them.

The principal structural elements are traditional repertories of short melodic motifs (Dumbrill 2005: 17). In the case of the lyres, the motivic repertories would have been derived from the pitches available in each respective pattern of tuning; in the case of the human voice, they would have been derived from the pitch inflections suggested by the natural utterance of text. Motivic structure applied as much to vocal utterance at specific pitches as to instrumental sound.

The idea that motivic melodic figures were used as structural elements in ancient Near Eastern music confirms a finding that emerged from research into Near Eastern synagogue chants undertaken by the ethnomusicologist A. Z. Idelsohn in the early decades of the twentieth century.[6] Idelsohn noted that motivic melodic structure was typical of chants used in Babylonia, Persia and the Yemen, places of ancient Israelite dispersion, for reading the sacred scriptures in the synagogue (Idelsohn 1929: 24–5 [§a], 38). He seems to have assumed that what he heard was a rendering of the chants exactly as they would have sounded some two to two and a half millennia earlier. While this would have been an unrealistic assumption as far as melodic identity is concerned, there seems no reason to doubt, given the insights provided by the cuneiform tablets discussed above, that the motivic melodic structure noted by Idelsohn was a very ancient traditional feature of chants used for formal scripture reading in the Near East.

Idelsohn's research revealed several additional features which can perhaps provide deeper insights into the idiom of ancient Near Eastern music than do the features revealed in the above groups of tablets. The most significant features to which Idelsohn drew attention (1929: 24–8) are:[7]

- traditional melodic figures as structural elements (as noted already);
- microtonal intervals;
- monophonic style;
- improvised ornamentation following accepted conventions;
- oral tradition of transmission (no musical notation);
- unison or random parallel intervals in communal song;
- semi-melodic motivic recitative for formal reading or reciting to an audience.

The penultimate feature in the list is somewhat surprising in view of the third. However, the use of random parallel intervals should not be regarded as implying an interest in harmony; rather, it suggests that each participant, although singing simultaneously with the others, chose an individually convenient pitch. Microtonal intervals are not likely to have been uniform (Smith 2011: 227). The first five features were probably also evident in renditions by melodic instruments harp, lyre and pipe.

It is not known how instrumental sound and vocal utterance at specific pitches related to each other when they occurred together. It cannot be automatically assumed that there was any requirement for them to begin or end simultaneously, for melodic instruments and voice(s) to use the same melodic figures as each other, or for melodic instruments to follow vocal pitches exactly, or in heterophony, or at all (Smith 2017).

Interim summary and remarks

The discussions above point to the existence of two basic musical idioms at the time and in the regions of Christianity's beginnings and early growth. One was a Hellenistic idiom; the other a general Near Eastern, non-Greek idiom. An actual example of Hellenistic Christian music is extant from the late third century CE, but it is isolated in time, place and genre, and therefore uninformative about the possible broader Christian use of Greek musical idiom.

The non-Greek, Near Eastern idiom, on the other hand, is broadly attested as far as its main features are concerned. However, the bulk of direct evidence covers a long period prior to the beginning of the Christian era; there is therefore uncertainty about the extent to which musical features evident in cuneiform tablets discussed earlier, and the purportedly ancient musical features observed in the early twentieth century, were current in the early centuries CE. It is nevertheless noteworthy that six of the seven features listed near the end of the previous subsection (the exception is the penultimate item) belong also to Arab *maqāmāt* (Smith 2011: 226–7), Jewish cantillation (Katz 2000: 63) and Christian chants, as they were employed for the reading of sacred scriptures in the central Middle Ages.[8] Thus the musical features of Medieval Arab and Semitic chant can be seen as forming a chronological 'stepping stone' between the musical features observed by Idelsohn in the early twentieth century and those revealed in ancient cuneiform tablets. There is therefore a strong likelihood, given the tenacity of oral tradition in relation to sacred texts, that what may be termed a Near Eastern Arab–Semitic musical idiom, possessing the features listed above, existed alongside certain elements of Hellenistic musical idiom, and that together – perhaps in various degrees of hybridity as well as discretely – they constituted the sound-world of early Christianity.

The substance of early Christian music

Musical styles

Several different musical styles are evident during the period. In the absence of actual musical evidence (except in the case of the Oxyrhynchus hymn), the existence of a plurality of musical styles can be read out of contemporary historiography and the literary styles of texts that were uttered at specific pitches. Of course, a text is not its music; but something of the likely character of its music may be deduced from the nature of the text and the circumstances in which it would have been uttered.

Many of the earliest adherents of the new movement were ethnic or proselyte Jews and would have been familiar with a variety of musical styles from their Jewish background. Scriptural cantillation, lamentation and wailing, and song that belonged with dances, weddings and work, all had their musical styles which, it is reasonable to suppose, continued in use among those Jews who added a Christological dimension to their traditional beliefs.

Among adherents in communities where Jewish influence was not predominant, other musical styles are evident. Greek styles are widely attested. Ignatius of Antioch (*c.* 35–*c.* 107), for example, in his valedictory letters of encouragement to Christian communities in Ephesus and Rome, employs metaphors that make use of imagery drawn from Greek musical culture. He writes of the 'harmony [*harmonoia*] and symphonic [*sumphōnō*] love' of the Ephesian Christians, and exhorts them to 'join the chorus [*choros*]' and take up 'God's pitch [*chrōma theou*] in unison' (Ignatius, *Ephesians* 4.1, 2). He exhorts the Roman Christians to become a 'chorus [*choros*] in love [*agapē*]' in order to 'sing forth [*asēte*] to the Father in Jesus Christ' (Ignatius, *Romans* 2.2). The terminology and the context of its usage imply that the recipients of the letters would have been familiar with Greek musical practice and may have adopted it in their gatherings (Smith 2011: 176–7). As has been noted earlier, the Oxyrhynchus hymn (late third century) provides evidence of the early Christian use of the musical style of Greek hymns in Upper Egypt.

However, the Greek musical style did not find favour among all Christians. The Assyrian Christian writer Tatian (*c.* 120–*c.* 185), who spent most of his life in Rome, expressed a strong aversion to the Greek chorus (the implication being that in Christian gatherings song was not, or should not be, rendered in that way): 'I do not wish to gape at many singers nor do I care to look benignly upon a man who is nodding and motioning in an unnatural way' (Tatian, [*Tatianou*] *pros Hellēnas* 22; PG 6: 857; McKinnon 1993: 22 §30; Cain 2010; Smith 2011: 178).

An anecdote about Hilary of Poitiers (*c.* 310–368), related by Jerome in the Preface to Book 2 of his *Commentary on the Letter to the Galatians*, suggests that the styles of hymnody in Western Gaul and Asia Minor in the latter half of the fourth century were somewhat different from each other (Jerome, *Comm. Gal.* 2, *praefatio*; CCL 77A: 80; Cain 2010: 131; Smith 2011: 235). Writing of the time when Hilary began to compose hymns after his return in 360 from exile and sojourn in Phrygia, Jerome says: 'Hilary, the Rhone [*sic*] River of Latin eloquence, and himself a Gaul born at Poitiers, called the Gauls unteachable in the hymns he composed' (Cain 2010: 131). It is supposed that Hilary's hymns, although composed in Latin, exhibited a number of Eastern characteristics – perhaps including the melodic style – to which the Gauls were resistant.

While the historicity of Jerome's anecdote may be doubtful, the likelihood of considerable musical differences between Eastern and Western hymnody is supported by a comparison of the literary styles of the Syriac hymns of Ephrem the Syrian (*c.* 306–373) and the Latin hymns of Ambrose of Milan (*c.* 340–397). In addition to different languages of composition, the hymns display different approaches to the use of language. Immediacy of expression and vividness of imagery characterise the 400 or so extant hymns and other religious poems of Ephrem. The four hymns generally regarded as genuine compositions of Ambrose, on the other hand, are notable for their elegant, simple and restrained linguistic style. Furthermore, the formal structures and metrical patterns employed by the two authors differ considerably. Ambrose's hymns are much the simpler in both respects. Each hymn normally consists of multiple four-line stanzas, without rhyme and without refrains. Each line has eight syllables paired accentually weak–strong, producing iambic tetrameter. Ephrem's hymns, by contrast, are of two types: metrical homilies (*mēmrē*) and didactic hymns (*madrāshē*). Hymns of the former type consist of multiple two-line stanzas without refrains, each stanza being a heptosyllabic couplet. Hymns of the latter type are more varied in structure and metre although each item is also consistently isosyllabic. It was normal for a refrain to be sung after each stanza. But while each *madrāshā* had its own refrain text, the melody to which it was sung might also have been used for the refrains of other *madrāshē*. The melodies have not survived.[9]

Remarks by Augustine of Hippo (354–430) point to differences in the style of psalmody in Greek-speaking Alexandria compared with Latin-speaking Milan. In Book 10 of his *Confessions* he says that he was frequently told that Athanasius of Alexandria (*c.* 296/298–373) required the reader of Psalms to employ a modest melodic inflection 'closer to speaking [*pronuntianti*] than to singing [*canenti*]' (Augustine, *Conf.* 10.33.50; CCL 27: 181–2; McKinnon 1993: 154–5 §352; Smith 2011: 210). This contrasts with the impression he gives of a more mellifluous style for the rendering of psalms and canticles in Milan, which he experienced during his sojourn there in 384 to 388, writing: 'How much I wept at your hymns and canticles, deeply moved by the voices of your sweetly singing church' (*Conf.* 9.6.14; CCL 27: 141–2; McKinnon 1993: 154 §351) and subsequently referring to the 'melody of the sweet songs to which the Davidic Psalter is usually set' (*Conf.* 10.33.50; CCL 27: 181–2; McKinnon 1993: 154–5 §352; Smith 2011: 211).

A literary phenomenon found in several tractates in the Nag Hammadi scriptures suggests yet a further style of musical rendition. This large collection of Coptic scriptures (52 tractates gathered in 13 codices), compiled perhaps in the first half of the fourth century, embodies the teachings of several mystical cults loosely described as 'gnostic'. From the end of the first century CE onwards, gnostic elements were present to some extent in all religions in the lands around the Eastern Mediterranean.

The phenomenon in question consists of strings of vowels grouped in multiple repetitions of first one vowel then another. The following is an extreme example from the tractate *The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*:

A
Ō EE
Ō ĒĒĒ
ŌŌŌ III
ŌŌŌŌ OOOOO
ŌŌŌŌŌ UUUUUU
ŌŌŌŌŌŌ ŌŌŌŌŌ
ŌŌŌŌŌŌŌ ŌŌŌŌ

(Meyer 2007: 417–18)

There are similar examples elsewhere in the same tractate, and similar as well as shorter examples in four other tractates. The literary contexts imply that the passages of vowels were intended to be uttered, and in some cases uttered as song, but they do not indicate the method of utterance – whether each written vowel was iterated separately (producing a 'stuttering' effect when one vowel is written several times in succession), or whether the number of successive written repetitions of a vowel represents a duration for which its sound is held. It is possible that the vowels indicate the respective mouth shapes to be formed while vocalising on a low monotone; the changing mouth shapes would then give rise to changing vocal harmonics, a style of singing known as 'overtone singing' or 'throat singing'. It is a very ancient vocal technique used by, among others, Buddhist monks in Mongolia, Tibet, Tuva (southern Russia) and northern India, regions whence gnostic teachings percolated westward a little before the beginning of the Common Era (Smith 2011: 219–20).

Musical instruments

There is no clear evidence that Christians played musical instruments at their sacred gatherings or in their private devotions. Indeed, many of the Church Fathers expressed strong disapproval of Christians playing musical instruments at all.[10] There are overlapping ideological, social and political reasons why this was so. Paramount among them seems to have been that in Greco-Roman society musical instruments were associated with decadence, moral laxity, superstition, polytheistic religious rituals and war, and were thus symbols of a lifestyle abhorrent to the believers. Rejecting musical instruments belonged with rejecting that lifestyle (McKinnon 2000: 774–9; Smith 2011: 169–74).

It is also possible that the believers in Jesus wished to demonstrate to their detractors that they posed no threat to the state or to society generally,[11] but that the sober lifestyle they espoused was one of pacifism, moral rectitude, humanity and social good. Their rejection of musical instruments was an outward symbol of the inherent peaceable goodness of their way of life.

In addition, it may be noted that for the Jewish believers in Jesus the absence of musical instruments in religious gatherings was nothing new. It was part of their Jewish heritage that religious gatherings away from the Temple – especially those of local communities at their synagogues, but also those of families and households in domestic settings – took place typically without the sound of instruments, except for the occasional shofar call used for signalling in connection with religious observances at the synagogue (Smith 2011: 117–21, 132).

Although musical instruments of many types are referred to in the HB and the LXX as being played by the ancient Israelites and the early Jews, Christians chose not to play them, but allowed themselves to refer to them allegorically, metaphorically or in similes, as a poetic enrichment of their expression of faith (Smith 2011: 169–74).

What the early Christians sang

During the first five centuries or so CE, as well as later, Christian song is most usually referred to by the Greek terms *psalmos*, *humnos* and *asma/ōdē* and their cognates, and by their respective Latin equivalents *psalmus*, *hymnus* and *canticum/cantus/carmen*. In English those terms are commonly rendered 'psalm', 'hymn' and 'song' respectively, where 'psalm' is generally taken to mean a text from OT Psalms, 'hymn' a free poetic text in praise of God or Jesus, and 'song' a free poetic text of a general religious nature or a biblical poetic text from outside Psalms. However, the common translations and their generally accepted meanings can be unreliable guides as to the nature of the material referred to in the Greek and Latin texts.

Psalmos and *psalmus*

The Codex Vaticanus (fourth century) and the codex Alexandrinus (fifth century), two of the earliest extant comprehensive manuscripts of the LXX, provide the Book of Psalms with the titles *psalmoi* 'psalms' and *psaltērion* 'for [performance to] the psaltery', respectively. The first perhaps emphasises the literary genre, the second the association of the genre with the sound of plucked strings. The earliest extant titles of the two versions of Psalms in the Vulgate designate the contents as *psalmi* 'psalms' (Weber and Gryson 2007: 770, 771).[12] In addition to the overall titles of the collection, 66 individual items in LXX Psalms are designated in their superscriptions by various forms of the word *psalmos*. In Vulgate Psalms, the Latin designation '*psalmus*' correlates with 65 of the LXX Greek designations (the exception is Vulg. Ps. 80 which lacks a musical term in its superscription).

In the NT, two quotations are specified as originating *en biblō psalmōn* 'in the Book of Psalms' (Luke 20:42; Acts 1:20). Comparison with the text of LXX Psalms verifies this. Generic references to Psalms are observable in, for example, the apocryphal *Acts of Paul* where it is reported that believers feasted 'amid the singing of psalms of David and of hymns' (*Acts Paul* 9; *NTApoc* 2: 258), and in the quotations from Augustine's *Confessions* given above. A passage providing a generic reference followed by reference to a specific group of items from Psalms is found in what is probably an early third-century work, the *Apostolic Tradition*, which says:

> And then, when they get up after the dinner, they shall pray, and the children and the virgins shall say psalms. And afterwards the deacon . . . shall say one of the psalms in which 'alleluia' is written. After that . . . again from the same psalms.
>
> (Trad. ap. *25.11–13; SC 11 bis; Stewart 2015: 165)*[13]

However, during the early centuries CE, many psalms outside those of the biblical canon were in circulation. The LXX's supernumerary psalm, Ps. 151, is designated *psalmos* in its superscription. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Psalms Scroll from Qumran (11QPs[a]) contains, besides several canonical psalms, the underlying Hebrew texts of three of five apocryphal Syriac psalm-like religious poems (DJD 4.53–76). There existed in addition a collection of 18 pseudepigraphical psalms, written perhaps in the first century BCE, known as the *Psalms of Solomon*. The text, originally Hebrew, is extant in Greek and Syriac. The *Pss. Sol.* may have been styled in imitation of the canonical Psalms (Rahlfs 1935: II, 471–89; *OTP* 2: 639–70; Smith 2011: 90; Schreiber 2014). The collection as a whole is entitled *Psalmoi* 'psalms'; six of its individual items are designated *psalmos* 'psalm' in their superscriptions.

Humnos and *hymnus*

Ancient Greek culture defined the *humnos* fairly strictly as a regularly metrical strophic composition in praise of a deity, deities, heroes of the past (historical and mythological) or great men of the time of

composition. It also prescribed the hymnic styles appropriate to circumstances of use such as sympotic, funerary, sacred ritual and so on (Pralon 2014). In later antiquity the formal strictures were relaxed (West 1992: 132 n. 11), and the resultant style is reflected in the earliest extant Christian hymns in Greek such as the Oxyrhynchus hymn, *Phōs hilaron* (see Figure 36.2) and *Doxa en hupsistois theō/Gloria in excelsis Deo* 'Glory to God in the highest' (a free poetic extension of Luke 2:14) superscribed *humnos heōthinos* 'dawn hymn' in an early collection of Greek *Ōdai*. The terms *humnos* and *hymnus* are also used to refer to religious poetry that does not belong to the Greek tradition but which is called 'hymn' because of its laudatory character. This applies most often to religious poetry in languages other than Greek (for example, the ancient Syriac and Latin hymnography referred to earlier), but also to some examples in Greek, especially Greek translations from other languages.

However, LXX Psalms contains six items designated in their superscriptions by the term *humnos* (alone and with one or more additional terms; LXX Pss. 6; 53; 54; 60; 66; 75) of which two instances correlate with *hymnus* in the superscriptions of Vulgate Psalms 60 and 66.

Asma/ōdē and *canticum/cantus/carmen*

In the LXX, 35 psalms are designated *ōdē* in their superscriptions: 22 by *ōdē* alone, 13 by *ōdē* and one or two additional terms. These correlate almost completely with *canticum* in the superscriptions of Vulgate Psalms (the sole exception is Vulg. Ps. 4 where *carmen* is the Latin equivalent of Greek *ōdē*).

In other ancient sources several poetic items are designated or referred to by one or other of the Greek and Latin words for song. The following poetic sections of the OT, outside Psalms, are so designated in the LXX and the Vulgate:

- Exodus 15:1–19 (the Song of the Sea), *ōdē/carmen*;
- Numbers 21:17–18 (the Song of the Well), *asma/carmen*;
- Deuteronomy 32:1–43 (the Song of Moses), *ōdē/carmen* (see 31:19, 21, 22, 30; 32:44);
- Judges 5:1–31 (the Song of Deborah), *ōdē/canticum* (at 5:12; compare 5:1);
- 2 Samuel 22:1–51 (David's song of thanks and praise), *ōdē/carmen* (also as Ps. 17 [HB 18] with variants, the superscription of which has *ōdē/canticum*);

Phōs hilaron / Cheering light

Phōs hilaron hagias doxēs, athanatou Patros,
ouraniou, hagíou, makaros, Iēsou Christe,
elthontes epi tēn hēliou dusin, idontes phōs hesperinon,
humnoumen Patera, Huion, kai hagion Pneuma, Theon.
Axion se en pasi kairois humneisthai phōnais aisiais,
Huie Theou, zoēn ho didous· dio ho kosmos se doxazei.

Cheering light of the holy glory of the immortal Father,
heavenly, holy, blessed, Jesus Christ,
having come to the setting of the sun, having seen the evening light,
we hymn [*humnoumen*] the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit, God.
You are worthy at all times to be hymned [*humneisthai*] with happy voices,
Son of God, giver of life; therefore all creation glorifies you.

My translation. Greek text from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phos_Hilaron> with accents removed.

Figure 36.2 Anonymous early Christian hymn *Phōs hilaron*/'Cheering light', *c.* third or early fourth century CE

- Song of Songs 1:1 (title of the Book), *asma/canticum* (each term appears twice);
- Isaiah 5:1–2 (an allegorical song about a vineyard), *asma/canticum*;
- Isaiah 26:1–12 (a song of hope for Jerusalem), *asma/canticum*.

In the NT, the text at Rev. 5:9–10 is presented as a 'new song' (*ōdēn kainēn/novum canticum*), and the text at Rev. 15:3b–4 is described in 15:3a as 'the song of Moses . . . and the song of the lamb' using *ōdē/canticum* twice.

Certain early manuscripts of the LXX preserve a collection of poetic items drawn from the OT and NT and traditionally known as *Ōdai* 'odes, songs'. In the four earliest manuscript sources, the number and order of individual 'odes' varies; the conflated total is 14. The collection has no title in those four manuscript sources, but many of its component items were sung liturgically in the Office of the Eastern Church, which seems to have justified the name 'odes' for the collection (Rahlfs 1935: II, 164–83, 1967: 78–80, 340–65). Only three of the items are actually designated 'song' (*ōdē* for all three): the first (Exod. 15:1–19, the Song of the Sea), the second (Deut. 32:1–43, the Song of Moses), and the tenth (Isa. 5:1–9, an allegorical song and its continuation). The last-mentioned item, in addition to being designated *ōdē*, is referred to as *asma* in its opening line.

A collection of 42 pseudepigraphical Christian religious poems known as the *Odes of Solomon*, dating from some time during the first three centuries CE, are reckoned to have circulated in Jewish-Christian milieux in Syria (their likely region of origin) and perhaps in Israel/Palestine. Several of the *Odes of Solomon* mention or imply the singing of 'odes' ('songs') (e.g. *Odes Sol.* 7.22–23; 14.7; 26.2; 36.2), suggesting that the present compositions are meant. Some also mention the playing of the 'harp' (*kithara*) in relation to the singing (e.g. *Odes Sol.* 14.7–8; 26.2–3). However, the instrumental references may be metaphorical (*OTP*, 2: 725–71; McKinnon 1993: 23–4; Smith 2011: 170–1).

Remarks

The terms 'hymn', 'psalm' and 'song' were not applied consistently in the early centuries of Christianity. In some instances, twofold or even threefold designations could occur, especially in Psalms. In LXX Psalms 66 and 75, the Greek superscriptions add *en humnois* 'among the hymns' to the existing twofold designations in the equivalent Hebrew psalms (Pss. 67 and 76). Those anomalies were already present in two of the earliest biblical codices, the mid fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus (LXX) and the early tenth-century Aleppo Codex (HB), as is shown for Psalm 66/67 in Figures 36.3 and 36.4. The terms *ōdē/carmen* (and so on) are most often used generically to mean 'song' in the sense of something sung as opposed to something spoken. Clearly, where any of these terms occur without pertinent defining information, their interpretation must be approached with caution.

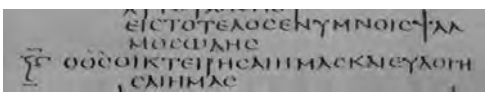

Figure 36.3 Opening of Psalm 66 (LXX) in Codex Sinaiticus (330–360 CE). © The British Library Board, Add. MS43725, Quire 6, f. lv. The superscription (the first two lines in the image) may be translated: 'for the end among the hymns a psalm of a song'

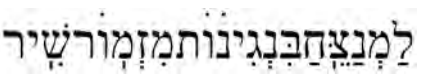

Figure 36.4 Superscription to Psalm 67 (Hebrew Bible) in Aleppo Codex (*c.* 920 CE). After Aleppo Codex Online, Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem, © 2007. The text may be translated: 'for the leaders [?] on stringed instruments psalm song'

Embedded poetic texts

The question of whether any of the poetic material embedded in the NT, its Apocrypha and the patristic literature was sung by the early Christians has received noteworthy attention in recent years (Cosgrove 2006: 266–8; Smith 2011: 182–7; Brucker 2014; Leonhard 2014; Löhr 2014). Inasmuch as poetic texts in antiquity were naturally susceptible of utterance at specific pitches, and it is known from the contents of the collection of *Ōdai* discussed earlier that both OT and NT canticles came to be used liturgically,[14] the question is more one of chronology than feasibility. Indeed, there is no immediate reason why the poetic material in the NT, including acclamations and encomia (but excluding three quotations from Greek pagan poetry),[15] should not have been part of early Christian song. Similarly with passages such as Anna's song of thanksgiving on the first birthday of her daughter Mary, in the Eastern-Christian *Protevangelium of James* 6 (second half of second century; Smith 2011: 143 n. 21, 148–9), and the hymnic conclusion to Clement of Alexandria's *Paedagogus* (end of second century; Cosgrove 2006: 266–8; but compare Smith 2011: 211 n. 86) (see Figure 36.5).

Hymn to Christ the Saviour by Holy Clement

Bridle of untamed colts, | wing of static birds, | firm rudder of ships, |
shepherd of royal sheep; | these your simple | children gather, |
to sing [*aineîn*] holily, | to hymn [*humneîn*] guilelessly | with innocent mouths |
Christ guide of children. | King of saints, | word almighty | father in the highest, |
wise ruler, | support in sorrow | source of endless joy, | of the human race |
saviour Jesus, | shepherd, husbandman, | rudder, bridle, | wing to heaven |
for the all-holy flock, | fisher of mortals | drawn safely in | from ocean of sin, |
the chaste fish | from the dreaded swell | by the bait of sweet life. |
sheep of the word | holy shepherd, | guide [us], king | innocent children; |
footsteps of Christ | pathway to heaven. | Eternal word, | everlasting age, |
eternal light, | fount of mercy, | agent of virtue | noble [their] lives |
who hymn [*humnountōn*] God. | Christ Jesus, | heavenly milk |
from the sweet breasts | of the favoured virgin | given of your wisdom, |
under the burden of sorrow. | The little children | with tender mouths |
suckle at the breast, | of the maternal word | the dewy spirit | until sated, |
[in] simple praises [*ainous*], | upright hymns [*humnous*] |
[to] the kingship of Christ, | let us pay what is due | for the teaching of life, |
singing [*melpōmen*] together, | united in purpose | [to(?)] the mighty child, |
in a chorus [*choros*] of peace | followers of Christ, | chaste people, |
let us together praise [*psallōmen*] | the God of peace.

Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 3.12.101. The translation above is mine, based on that in Wood 1954: 276–8, and that in SC 158 (1970): 193–203. Editions of the Greek text are available in PG 8: 681–4 (which adds a poetic text 'To the Instructor' after the hymn), and (with parallel French translation) in SC 158 (1970): 192–202 (without additional poetic material). Those two texts have a number of additional variant readings; these and manuscript variants are noted in the critical apparatus in SC 158. Lineation and punctuation follow the Greek text in SC 158.

Figure 36.5 Hymn from Clement of Alexandria, *Paedogogus*, *c.* 198 CE

How early such items might have been in use cannot be determined precisely. The date of composition of the literature in which they are embedded can be taken as a reasonable earliest possible date. Nevertheless, it is highly likely that Clement's hymn had an independent prior existence (Cosgrove 2006: 266–7). It is also possible that some of the poetic material in the canonical and apocryphal NT (perhaps including some of the encomia, such as Phil. 2:6–11; Eph. 5:14; Col. 1:15–20; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:11–13), existed independently of and prior to its appearance in the literary sources (*contra* Brucker 2014),[16] but this is speculation.

The form of early Christian song in its settings

Christian literature of the first five centuries CE witnesses a variety of forms of both plain and responsive song among believers. Such forms were common throughout the Mediterranean lands and the Near East in antiquity and are well attested in the Bible.

Plain forms may have been rendered collectively or by a soloist. In narrative texts, the singing could be shared between several singers in turn, representing different characters or groups. Examples might be the Song of Deborah in Judges 5:2–31 (Deborah, Barak, Narrator; Smith 2011: 99–100) and the Song of Songs.

Biblical Psalms contain several items for which responsive performance is implied by a superscribed 'Hallelujah' or an embedded liturgical instruction (LXX Ps. 117 [HB 118]:1–4, 29), and one for which it is explicit at every verse (LXX Ps. 135 [HB 136]). Curiously, the Greek text of LXX Ps. 135 (HB 136), in addition to giving the response material at each verse, has '*allelouia*' as a superscription. If this is not an accidental addition, it suggests a number of possible performance variants. Certain of the canticles of the OT and its Apocrypha suggest responsive performance by the presence of periodic or changing refrains, as, for example, in David's lament over Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:19–27) and the Song of the Three (LXX Sg Three [= NRSV The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews, verses 28–68]).

First to early third centuries

The settings for Christian song during the early centuries of the Jesus movement were typically local gatherings of believers, more or less domestic in character. Christian sources from the first to the early third centuries provide only occasional insights into the form of singing. Remarks such as 'When you assemble, each one has a psalm [*psalmōn*] . . . ' (NT 1 Cor. 14:26) and, 'each is urged to come into the middle and sing to God, either from the sacred scriptures or from his own invention' (Tertullian [*c.* 155–*c.* 240], *Apology* 39.18; McKinnon 1993: 43 §74) imply solo song, as does a passage in the *Odes of Solomon* where the author says that his love of the Lord causes him to 'sing unto him [the Lord]' (*Odes Sol.* 16.1–2; *OTP* 2: 749).

A background of collective plain singing is perhaps the basis for the metaphors of 'chorus' and 'unison' used by Ignatius of Antioch in his letters to the Ephesians and the Romans. Collective song is also implied in the *Odes of Solomon* 7.22–23 and 41.1–2.

Responsive song is implied in the passage from the *Apostolic Tradition* 25:11–13, cited earlier, the continuation of which says, 'And afterwards, the bishop, having offered the cup, he shall say a psalm proper to the cup, while all say "alleluia". And all of them, as he recites the psalms, shall say "alleluia"' (*Trad. ap.* 25.13–14; Stewart 2015: 165).

The psalms with 'alleluia' were also a feature of private prayer. Tertullian, for example, in his work *Prayer*, recommended five times of prayer each day, adding 'The more exacting in their prayer are accustomed to add to their prayers an Alleluia and that sort of psalm in which those present respond with the closing verses [*clausulis respondeant*]' (Tertullian, *De oratione* 27; CCL 1: 273; McKinnon 1993: 44 §78).

Parallels with the singing of *skolia* at Hellenistic banquets are noticeable in several early glimpses of Christian song. The *skolion* was a strophic song each verse of which was composed spontaneously and sung by each participant in turn as a lyre (for accompaniment) was passed to him; there was a strong element of rivalry attached to the cleverness of the verses (Collins 2005). In the Christian parallels there is no hint of rivalry, and the lyre is absent, but the idea of each participant coming forward and offering an oral contribution – sometimes a song from 'the sacred scriptures' or 'from his own invention' – is evident in NT 1 Cor. 14:26, in the Bithynian Christians' song to Christ which they reportedly sang *secum invicem* 'among themselves in turn' (Pliny the Younger, *Letters* [*to Trajan*], 10.96:7; McKinnon 1993: 27 §41; Smith 2011: 177), and in Tertullian's *Apology* 39.18, referred to earlier, which says that during an *agapē* (a type of Christian banquet), when the evening meal is finished and the lamps are lit, 'each [participant] is urged to come into the middle and sing to God' (McKinnon 1993: 43 §74).

Late third to fifth centuries

As Christianity developed from a regionally dispersed new religion to the cohesive institutionalised state religion of the Roman empire, additional settings for Christian song came into being. Two are especially noteworthy: one is coenobitic worship offered by ascetics in their communal seclusion; the other is public worship offered by Christian communities in their basilicas, churches and other places of Christian assembly which by the end of the third century Christians had begun to own, and which after the Edict of Milan of 313 proliferated in urban areas. Both types of setting witnessed to considerably developed forms of worship and to the establishment of various categories of liturgical officiants, including 'singers' and 'readers'.[17]

Among anchoritic and coenobitic ascetics, the principal form of worship was prayer using the biblical psalms as its main vehicle. Many coenobitic establishments had strict regimes of daily prayer at set hours (the Offices). The use of psalms and canticles as material for prayer, devotion and liturgy became widespread in public assemblies. Biblical psalms and canticles were favoured since they were scriptural and therefore automatically orthodox. Freely composed hymns were also sung in coenobitic and public worship, although in the region of Hippo Regius in North Africa, such hymns may not have been customary in public worship until after the beginning of Augustine's episcopacy there in 396 (Ghisalberti 2015).

Three forms of responsive psalmody are identifiable and are applicable to all biblical poetry in psalmodic style. The term 'responsive' as used here implies the recitation of a psalmodic text by two or more vocal units in such a way that one or other vocal unit is perceived as 'responding' to another. The three forms are: (1) simple responsive psalmody: a group interjects a brief acclamation repeatedly at intervals as a soloist recites the verses; (2) antiphonal psalmody: two groups of approximately equal numbers alternate in reciting successive verses of text; and (3) responsorial psalmody: either (a) a group regularly interpolates a refrain as a soloist recites the psalm verses, or (b) two approximately balanced groups alternate in reciting the verses but combine at regular intervals to interpolate a refrain. Alternative (3a) resembles simple responsive psalmody; alternative (3b) is a kind of hybrid of simple responsive and antiphonal psalmody. The important point here, however, is that the material of the 'refrain' is a substantial portion of text, typically a whole psalm verse. Confusingly, the refrain material (normally a verse taken from the psalm being recited) is called an 'antiphon', a feature which sometimes makes the source texts unclear; for example, when Egeria writes of *antiphonae* being sung in the Jerusalem liturgies (Egeria, *Itinerarium* 24.1, 4, 8; Smith 2011: 202–3), it is usually impossible to determine whether she means antiphonal psalmody, responsorial psalmody (psalms with antiphons) or antiphon texts alone.

Antiphonal and responsorial psalmody were 'learned' forms, requiring all participants to have considerable knowledge of the texts. They were particularly appropriate for ascetics and clergy. Simple

responsive psalmody, however, was a popular form in which laity could participate without prior knowledge. The simple responsive style was not confined to psalmodic material. Egeria, for example, writes of an Office in Jerusalem during which people were commemorated by name, to which young boys responded '*Kyrie eleison*' as each name was read out (Egeria, *Itinerarium* 24.5; Smith 2011: 203).

Freely composed hymns were for popular use in domestic settings and in vigils, processions and the public Office. Many seem to have been written – or at least used – to counter heretical doctrines disseminated in hymnic form. Arianism in particular posed a threat to orthodox Christianity because it numbered wealthy and influential representatives of both church and state among its adherents. Hymns were important weapons in what became a political as well as a doctrinal battle (Smith 2011: 198–9). The hymns, such as those of Ambrose of Milan and Ephrem the Syrian, were couched in simple, regular strophic forms, in regular metre (often isosyllabic), which facilitated learning. Some had refrains, thereby opening for simple responsive performance and ease of lay participation.

Not all early Christian free hymns originated as weapons in ideological conflict. The text of the hymn *Phōs hilaron* (reputedly used in the home and the Office as an evening hymn when lamps were lit and is one of the earliest hymns; see Figure 36.2) is devotional, and that of *Doxa en hupsistois theō* (used in the early morning Office) is both prayerful and hymnic (Smith 2011: 200–1). Many Ambrosian style hymns were probably intended for devotional rather than polemical purposes.

Concluding remarks

It is clearly impossible to know for certain what the music of the early Christians was like. Nevertheless, reasonable conjectures may be made based on an understanding of the musical concepts and idioms prevalent in the regions where Christianity had its origin and early development, and the literary styles of the kinds of item the earliest believers in Jesus would have uttered at specific pitches.

The discussions in the foregoing pages suggest that the music of early Christianity consisted of unaccompanied monophonic motivic chant ranging from simple, almost monotone recitative to mellifluous song. Simple recitative would have been appropriate for the delivery of non-poetic prose; poetic prose is likely to have engendered more expansive musical styles. Strophic texts – with and without interpolated refrains – would have naturally generated regularly repetitive musical forms.

Pitch-specific delivery of a text could be undertaken by an individual or a group. Delivery by a group made possible various responsive styles of presentation, especially where strophic texts with refrains were concerned.

Hymnody and psalmody were the most prominent types of early Christian music. They, together with the simple recitative formulas used for reading scriptures and reciting liturgy, were to characterise Christian worship for many centuries to come.

Abbreviations

CCL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
Grove Music Online	*Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press: 2001–. www.oxfordmusiconline.com/public/book/omo_gmo (subscription)
DJD	*Discoveries in the Judaean Desert. 40 vols. Oxford, UK: Clarendon: 1951–2009*
HB	Hebrew Bible
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LXX	Septuagint (cited here in the edition Rahlfs 1935)
MGG	*Die Musik i Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Finscher. 2nd edn. 29 vols. Bärenreiter/Metzler: 1994–2008

MGG Online	*Die Musik i Geschichte und Gegenwart. Online edn.*, ed. Lütteken. Bärenreiter/Metzler/RILM: 2014–. https://www.baerenreiter.com/en/program/mgg-online/ (subscription)
New Grove	*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Sadie and Tyrrell. 2nd edn. 29 vols. Macmillan/Grove: 2001
NT	New Testament
NTApoc	*New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Schneemelcher, trans. Wilson. Rev. ed. 2 vols. James Clarke and Westminster/John Knox Press: 1991, 1992
OT	Old Testament
OTP	*The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. Charlesworth. 2 vols. Darton, Longman & Todd: 1983, 1985
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PL	Patrologia Latina
SC	Sources chrétiennes

Notes

1 What follows in this section is expanded from ideas presented in Smith 2017.

2 In addition to biblical and Bible-related texts, see the iconographic material and information in Manniche 1991; Kilmer 1998; Braun 2002 (includes a chapter on 'The Hellenistic–Roman Period'); Dumbrill 2005; Burgh 2006; Kolyada 2009; Teeter 2011; and under appropriate headings in *New Grove* (updated online as *Grove Music Online*) and *MGG* Sachteil (updated online as *MGG Online*).

3 Recent monographs on ancient Greek music include: West 1992; Levin 2009 (but see the review in Holford-Strevens 2010: 325–34); Hagel 2010. Transcriptions from Greek musical notation: e.g. West 1992: 283–326. Collected ancient Greek writings on music, in English translation with commentary and notes: Barker 1984, 1989. The ancient Greeks are also noted for their theoretical investigations into the properties of sound; but even in antiquity there was an acknowledged gap between theory and practice (Holford-Strevens 2010: 328 and n. 9 there).

4 Dumbrill (2005: 111–74) presents a detailed, illustrated *catalogue raisonné* of the extant Hurrian hymn tablets, including the fragments. Dumbrill also presents reproductions and discussions of five different transcriptions (four previously published, and a new one by Dumbrill himself) of the most substantial and best preserved of the Hurrian hymns/songs: that designated h.6 (2005: 118–20, 122, 130), and black-and-white photographs and hand drawn copies of h.6 (2005: 115–16, 133). See also Smith 2011: 115.

5 The term 'scale' used by modern commentators in connection with ancient Near Eastern music should be understood as referring to a product of theoretical analysis: an extrapolation of each of the different pitches playable with a given tuning pattern, arranged in ascending or descending order. Thus 'scale' serves to identify the individual pitches available in a designated 'area' of sound, but without hierarchical tonal implications.

6 The material results of Idelsohn's research appeared in his monumental collection of Near Eastern ('Oriental' in Idelsohn's terminology) synagogue chants published as a ten-volume thesaurus, first in German (= Idelsohn 1914–1932). The publication history of the thesaurus is complex; some volumes were also published in English. The first five volumes provide material for the early chapters of Idelsohn 1929; they are also the most relevant in the present context.

7 Idelsohn's own interpretations and use of his findings raise many issues, especially with regard to the process of oral transmission, the preservation of melodic identity and relative chronology. Given the passage of time since Idelsohn wrote, it is inevitable that some aspects of his work have been superseded (see my critique in Smith 2011: 225–7). The following list itemises the objective results of Idelsohn's research, concentrating on the methods, principles and procedures to which he drew attention.

8 McGowan 2014: 86, citing Foley 1996: 65 n. 68. This is not to suggest that there was necessarily a material historical connection between any of the central Medieval manifestations of pitch-specific oral delivery of sacred texts, or between any one of those manifestations and possible earlier manifestations, although there was clearly an outward similarity of purpose, which can hardly have been a matter of chance (see further, Smith 2011: 224–34). The central Medieval Jewish, Islamic and Christian manifestations of the phenomenon referred to here were highly developed, incorporating syntactic, exegetical and interpretive elements. It is an open question how far such features were present in the pitch-specific oral delivery of sacred texts in earlier times.

9 Details and relevant bibliography in Smith 2011: 211–14. The four hymns generally acknowledged as genuine compositions of Ambrose are *Aeterne rerum conditor*, *Deus creator omnium*, *Jam surgit hora tertia* and *Veni redemptor gentium*. Several other hymns in Ambrosian style are possibly by Ambrose, but certainty is elusive since the style became popular and widely imitated. While Ephrem wrote in Syriac, many of his hymns were translated, especially into Greek. There are many false attributions. Further on Ambrose of Milan and Ephrem the Syrian, see, in the present volume, Chapter 57 (by Ivor Davidson), and Chapter 59 (by Kathleen McVey), respectively.

10 There has been speculation that in the early centuries CE Coptic Christians used instruments (perhaps bells, drums, finger cymbals and sistrums) in their assemblies, in common with their non-Christian Egyptian contemporaries, as they have done since at least the late Middle Ages (Maftah *et al.* 1991). However, confirmatory evidence is lacking. Clement of Alexandria's apparent condoning of lyre playing by Christians (*Paed.* 2, 4.43.3) almost certainly applies to circumstances other than sacred assemblies and devotions (Cosgrove 2006: 260–1).

11 They were accused of political subversion and gross anti-social behaviour, including cannibalism (as a result of misunderstanding about the nature of the Last Supper and the Eucharist). See, e.g. Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, Randall 1931, LCL 250 (1931): 304–437.

12 References to Vulg. Psalms herein are to the version *Psalmi iuxta LXX* (Weber and Gryson 2007: 767–955).

13 On *Trad. ap.*, see Stewart 2015. The authorship and date of *Trad. ap.* as a whole, and the section 25.10–15 in particular, have been the subject of considerable debate (Stewart 2015: 15–63, 167–8). Here Stewart (2015) and the majority of scholars are followed in viewing *Trad. ap.* as a collection of material from the Christian community in Rome in the late second and early third centuries, and assembled in its present form in the early third century. The LXX/Vulg. Psalms furnished with 'allēlouia/alleluia' are 104–6; 110; 111; 112–17 (the Hallel of Jewish tradition); 118; 134; 135; 145–150.

14 *Ōdai* contains three NT canticles: Luke 1:46–55; 68–79; 2:29–32.

15 Acts 17:28 is from a hymn to Zeus; 1 Cor. 15:33 and Titus 1:12 are most likely from Menander and Epimenides, respectively (Brucker 2014: 10).

16 Brucker (2014: 11) characterises the NT encomia as 'epideictic passages' and on that basis discounts them as examples of texts quoted from prior usage. However, overt displays of authorial skill do not in themselves preclude the possibility that these passages are quotations from, or allusions to, pre-existent material.

17 Most of what follows is distilled from Smith 2011: 193–216. On the development of the liturgical roles of singers and readers, see especially Page 2010: 89–171.

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37
IMAGINATIVE LITERATURE

Richard Bauckham

Introduction

Most early Christian literature was didactic, devotional or theological. But there is also imaginative literature, some examples of which we shall consider in this chapter. Such works, of course, had religious aims, but aims which were fulfilled by the telling of imaginative stories. Works of the narrative imagination are found especially among some of the so-called apocryphal works produced from the second century onwards. In this connection, the term 'apocryphal' should not be given much weight. These were not necessarily works which might have been included in the canon of the New Testament, but in fact were excluded. Most were never candidates for canonicity. They were not necessarily works condemned as heretical by the emerging orthodoxy of the Catholic Church, though some of them were. Many were widely read in thoroughly orthodox circles as edifying and entertaining literature, and some, even when roundly condemned by councils and theologians, were thought too good to lose by scholars and monks who preserved them, and much too interesting to abandon by ordinary readers with whom they remained popular. English translations of the Christian apocryphal works discussed in this chapter can be found in Elliott 1993 and Schneemelcher 1991–1992.

We might expect apocryphal gospels to be prominent among works of the Christian narrative imagination, but in fact no non-canonical gospel of the type that narrates the story of Jesus, as the canonical gospels do, survives in more than fragments. Surviving apocryphal gospels (mostly Gnostic) are collections of sayings of Jesus or dialogues between the risen Jesus and his disciples, not narratives. For stories of Jesus we must turn to more specialized off-shoots of the gospel genre: 'proto-gospels' and gospels of the Passion and Resurrection. The latter type (including especially the cycle of narratives known either as the *Gospel of Nicodemus* or as the *Acts of Pilate*), though important for its medieval influence, developed only in the later patristic period and will not be studied here. But 'proto-gospels' (often called birth and infancy gospels) which narrate Jesus' background (from before the birth of his mother), birth and childhood began to be written in the second century. We shall comment on the two second-century works of this type, from which all later such works developed: the *Protevangelium of James* and the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*.

These works illustrate how the Christian narrative imagination blossomed especially in the gaps left by the Christian story as the New Testament itself told it. This also happened in the case of stories about the apostles. The canonical Acts of the Apostles, the only canonical narrative about the early church, leaves a great deal untold. Even Paul's story is cut off at an indeterminate time before his death.

The other most famous apostle, Peter, drops out of the narrative of Acts half way through the book, and not even his later presence in Rome, well known to all later Christians, is mentioned. About the ministries of most of the twelve apostles, all of whom the risen Jesus commissions, at the beginning of Acts, to take the gospel to the ends of the earth, Acts has practically nothing to say. For this reason – and other reasons which will become apparent – apocryphal narratives of the deeds and deaths of individual apostles flourished from the second century onwards. We shall study the five oldest of these apocryphal Acts of apostles.

The *Protevangelium of James*

The *Protevangelium of James* is one of the most attractive of the early Christian apocryphal works, as well as one of the most influential (see Cothenet 1988; Vorster 1988). It tells a delightful story with considerable narrative skill. The title *Protevangelium* is not ancient, but is reasonably apt in that it describes the work as the beginning of the gospel story. It begins in fact at a chronological starting point prior even to that of Luke's Gospel, with a story about Mary's parents that leads to her birth, and ends shortly after the birth of Jesus. But the ascription of the work to James is probably original. He is James the brother of Jesus, here understood (as in other Christian literature of the second and third centuries) as one of Joseph's children by his first marriage. Already adult at the time of Jesus' birth, James was an eyewitness of the later parts of the narrative, though only in the conclusion does he reveal his authorship. Pseudonymity presumably supports one purpose of the work, which, as we shall see, is apologetic against derogatory stories of Jesus' birth and background. The *Protevangelium* was written in the second century.

The narrative

Like the first two chapters of Luke's Gospel, the narrative strongly evokes a Palestinian Jewish context, with an emphasis on the Temple in Jerusalem, though, unlike Luke's Gospel, much of the Jewish detail is fanciful rather than historically informed. At the outset of the work, Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna, a wealthy couple resident in Jerusalem, are childless. Their sorrow over this is poignantly described. Joachim retires to the wilderness, apparently with his flocks (*Protoevangelium of James* 1.2 and 4.2; see Figure 37.1).

In response to their prayers, an angel informs them that they are to have a child who will become world famous. Like her Old Testament prototype and namesake Hannah, Anna vows to give the child to God, and so at three years old Mary leaves her parents to live in the Temple, where she is miraculously fed by an angel. This part of the story, known as 'the presentation of Mary in the Temple', has inspired numerous artistic renditions (see Figure 37.2).

At twelve, approaching puberty, Mary cannot stay in the Temple without defiling it, and so an angel instructs the high priest Zechariah (evidently the Zechariah of Luke 1, the father of John the Baptist) to assemble the widowers of Judea, so that by a miraculous sign one may be selected to take Mary as his wife. Widowers are specified because it is intended that Mary remain a virgin and her husband be in reality a guardian. The choice goes to Joseph.

At the age of sixteen, Mary is addressed by an angel, as in Luke's annunciation story, and visits her kinswoman Elizabeth, as in Luke's Gospel. When she returns home, Joseph's reaction to her evident pregnancy and the angelic explanation to him in a dream are expansions of Matthew's account. When Mary's pregnancy becomes known to an outsider, Joseph is accused by the high priest of having defiled the virgin in his care. Both Mary and Joseph protest their innocence, and they are vindicated when the high priest puts them through the ordeal of drinking water that would harm them were they guilty.

Joseph and Mary appear to be living in Jerusalem, from where they set off for Bethlehem when the census is decreed. In one of its permanent contributions to the Christian imagination,

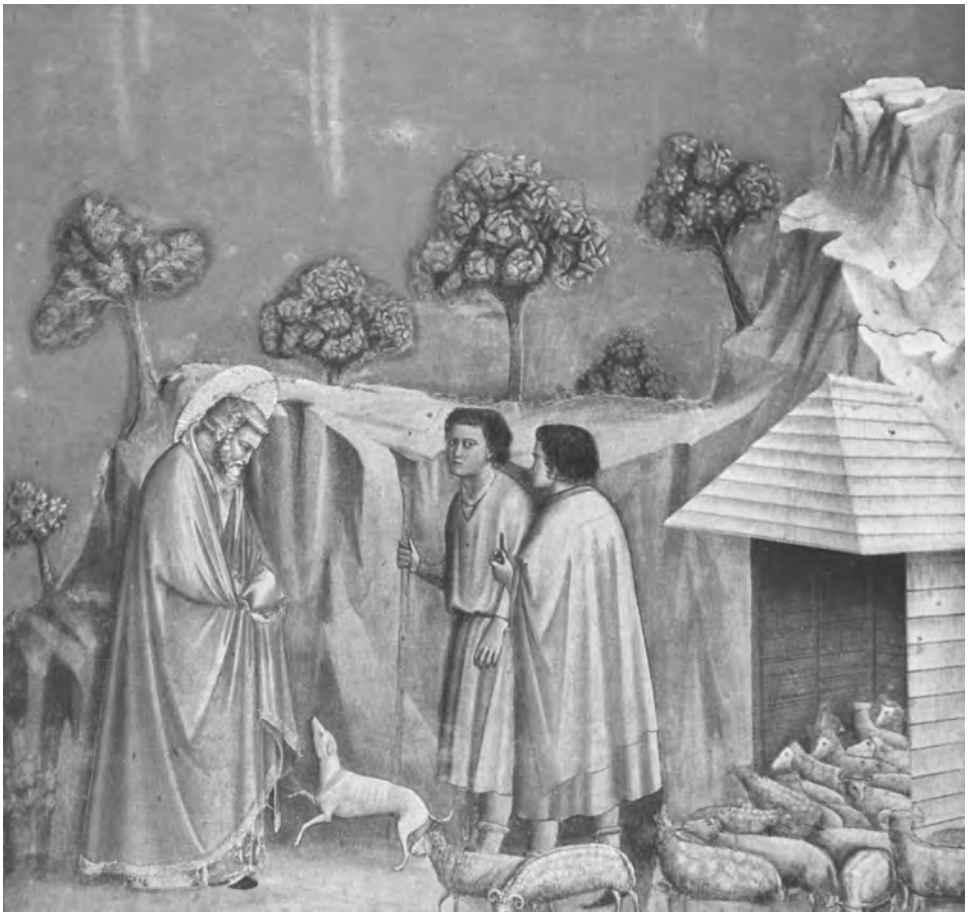

Figure 37.1 *Joachim Retires to the Sheepfold*; Giotto, the Arena chapel in Padua; Wikicommons; Source: Web Gallery of Art

the *Protevangelium* depicts Joseph seating the heavily pregnant Mary on a donkey for the journey. Another such contribution is its location of the birth of Jesus in a cave (a detail also found in Justin Martyr, writing at about the same time). They are only halfway to Bethlehem when Mary is about to give birth. Joseph leaves her with his sons in the cave, the only shelter in this desert region, while he goes to seek a midwife. He soon meets one who, entering the cave, witnesses the miraculous birth of Jesus. A cloud overshadows the cave; then an unbearably bright light appears in the cave; the child appears as the light withdraws. The midwife, deeply impressed, meets Salome outside the cave and tells her she has witnessed a virgin give birth. (Salome is probably Joseph's daughter, though in later versions of the story she becomes a second midwife.) The sceptical Salome refuses to believe unless she can put her finger on Mary's intact flesh. (There is clearly an echo of the Gospel of John's story of Thomas refusing to believe without himself touching the risen Christ.) Because she has tempted God with it, Salome's hand is consumed, but is healed when she prays and touches the new-born child.

The story of the visit of the magi is then told, following Matthew's account. When Herod decrees the slaughter of the children, Mary hides Jesus by wrapping him in swaddling clothes and laying him in a manger. Elizabeth flees from her home in fear with her son John, and a mountain opens to receive and to hide them. When Herod's officers can get no information from Zechariah as to the whereabouts of his son, Herod orders his death. He is murdered in the Temple, where the priests later find his blood petrified, though his body has vanished.

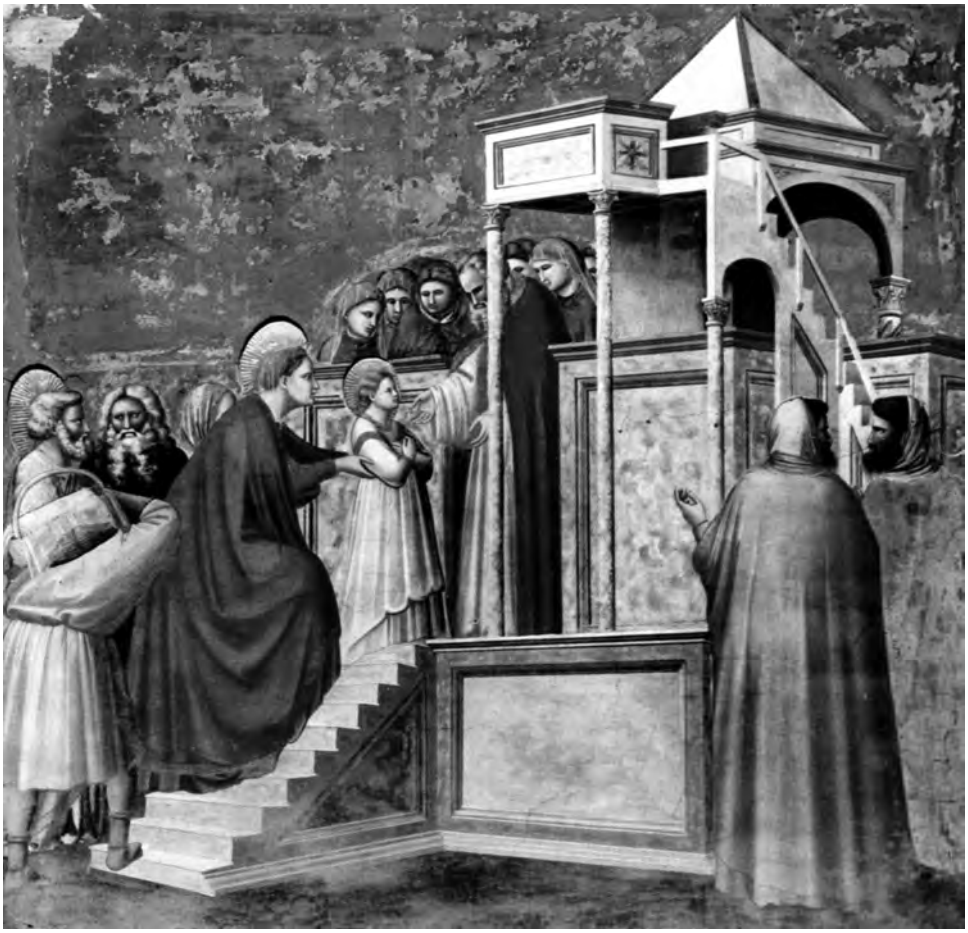

Figure 37.2 *The Presentation of Mary, Aged Three in the Temple;* Giotto, the Arena chapel in Padua; Wikicommons; Source: wga.hu

Literary character

The literary tradition to which the *Protevangelium* most obviously belongs is that of Jewish narrative works (sometimes called 'rewritten Bible' or, less accurately, 'midrash') which retell the biblical histories, expanding on the biblical versions in order to explain problems raised by the biblical texts, to fill in the gaps, to satisfy curiosity, to put a particular theological or ideological slant on the stories, and to enable readers imaginatively to enter the world of the biblical stories and characters more fully (see Cothenet 1988). Such works often create new stories inspired by – though deliberately also differing from – those told in the Bible about other characters. This is what happens in the *Protevangelium* when the story of Mary's conception and birth echoes those of Isaac, Samson and especially Samuel, or when the story of Salome's scepticism about the virgin birth parallels the Gospel of John's story of Thomas's scepticism about the resurrection. The imaginative account of Mary's birth and childhood satisfies the sense that someone of such significance as Mary in the history of salvation must have been marked out and prepared for this role from before her birth, just as Jewish literature told extra-biblical stories about the births of Noah (*1 Enoch* 106), Melchizedek (*2 Enoch* 71) and Moses (Pseudo-Philo, *Biblical Antiquities* 9). The later part of the *Protevangelium* is the first literary attempt to reconcile the two canonical narratives about Jesus' birth in the Gospels of

Matthew and Luke. The freedom with which it sometimes treats these latter (especially in matters of geography) is surprising, but not entirely unparalleled in the Jewish 'rewritten Bible' texts. Typical of Jewish exegetical method is the way the *Protevangelium* creates stories which explain some feature of the scriptural text. For example, Luke's statement that Mary laid the child Jesus in a manger (Luke 2:7) is explained as a way of hiding the child from Herod's soldiers. The gospels' reference to the murder of Zechariah in the Temple (Matt. 23:35; Luke 11:51) seemed to imply that this was a recent event (rather than the event narrated in 2 Chron. 24:19–22) and so required a story to explain it. The *Protevangelium*, following the common exegetical technique of assuming characters with the same name to be identical, therefore tells a story of the murder of Zechariah the father of John the Baptist, in consequence of Herod's attempt to destroy the messianic child.

Apologetic and polemic

Several features of the narrative suggest that it was at least partly designed to deflect charges made about Jesus' background and origins in Jewish polemic against Christians, which we know to have been current in the second century, principally from the citation of them in the work of the pagan anti-Christian writer Celsus. Since both Jews and pagans were contemptuous of Jesus' humble origins, the *Protevangelium* begins by pointing out that his grandfather Joachim was very wealthy, while Joseph's trade is portrayed as that of a master builder. The fact that no mention is made of Nazareth is probably due to a concern to deny that Jesus' origins were obscure. Mary was not a girl forced to earn her living by spinning, as the polemic asserted; she did spin, but what she made, according to the *Protevangelium*, was the curtain for the Temple. Against the slander that Jesus was conceived through extra-marital union, the *Protevangelium* is at great pains to relate how Mary's virginity was safeguarded and her innocence demonstrated in a way the Temple authorities themselves accepted. It may not be accidental that the flight into Egypt goes unmentioned, since Jewish polemic portrayed Jesus as a magician who learned his magic in Egypt.

Along with these responses to Jewish polemic goes a Christian counter-polemic against the Jews. On the way to Bethlehem, Joseph is puzzled that Mary appears to be mourning and laughing at the same time. She explains: 'I see with my eyes two peoples, one weeping and lamenting and one rejoicing and exulting'. While the passage echoes Genesis 25:23, it evidently means that Mary's son is to be the occasion for the sorrow of the Jews as well as for the rejoicing of Christians. From this perspective, the way the *Protevangelium* ends, with the story of the murder of Zechariah, often thought to be a later addition, is appropriate and effective. When Zechariah's blood is found in the Temple, a voice declares that it will not be wiped away until his avenger comes, referring no doubt to the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE.

Mariology

The way the *Protevangelium* develops the theme of Mary's virginity is a major step on the way to the mariological doctrines of a later period. To the canonical gospels' claim that Mary was a virgin when she conceived Jesus, the *Protevangelium* adds the claim that Jesus' birth was miraculous, such that Mary's virginity was preserved through it (the *virginitas in partu*), while it also implies that Mary remained a virgin thereafter, in that it depicts Joseph's children as those of his first wife, not Mary. These ideas are found in other second-century texts and so were not original to the *Protevangelium*, but it undoubtedly promoted them. It is not clear that they constitute an idealization of virginity as such. The idea of the miraculous birth probably has a scriptural origin (Isa. 66:7), while the emphasis on Mary's virginity seems related to her consecration for a unique role. That she remained a lifelong virgin may reflect a sense that the womb which had borne the Son of God should not be subsequently used for other and ordinary births (cf. 1 Sam. 6:7). Mary's special consecration for her extraordinary role in God's purposes is the focus of the work, rather than her lifelong virginity

as an example to be imitated. On the other hand, sexual asceticism was certainly already current as an ideal in some Christian circles in the later second century, as the apocryphal Acts testify, and so the *Protevangelium* may owe something to that context.

It is noteworthy that the *Protevangelium*'s interest in Mary is not properly biographical (by contrast with medieval lives of the Virgin). It does not continue her story beyond her role in salvation history, which it does not extend beyond the birth of Jesus. Its interest is solely in the way Mary was prepared for and fulfilled her unique vocation to be the virgin mother of the Saviour.

The *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*

Both curiosity and convention required appropriate stories, not only about the background and birth of a great man, but also about his childhood. Such stories, like the only one the canonical gospels tell about the boy Jesus (Luke 2:41–51) or one which Jewish tradition told about the young Abraham (*Jubilees* 11.18–24), should prefigure the role the adult is going to play in history. The *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, also from the second century, complements the *Protevangelium of James* by telling stories of the miracles done by Jesus between the ages of five and twelve, concluding by reproducing Luke's story of the 12-year-old Jesus in the Temple, thereby attaching itself to the canonical gospel story (see Gero 1971).

The fact that a non-biblical character, Annas the scribe, appears in both the *Protevangelium* and the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* suggests that the author of the latter knew the former and deliberately filled the chronological gap left between the *Protevangelium* and the canonical Gospel story. The title *Infancy Gospel* is modern, but the attribution to the apostle Thomas is ancient and may indicate that the work derives from the Christian tradition of the east Syrian area, which connected itself especially with Thomas (cf. the *Acts of Thomas*, discussed later). However, it displays none of the special theological characteristics of that tradition.

This work has none of the literary sophistication of the *Protevangelium of James*. What literary skill it displays consists in the telling of stories concisely and vividly. The miracles the boy Jesus performs anticipate, within the world of Jesus' childhood in Nazareth, the kinds of miracles he would perform in his adult ministry. Miracles of cursing and destruction occur disproportionately often, but there are also, for example, a miracle of raising the dead and a miracle of multiplication of wheat. The effect these miracles have in the stories corresponds to the way the gospel miracles were commonly understood in the patristic period: they demonstrate to people that Jesus is no mere human. One of the more sophisticated and attractive is the first story, in which the 5-year-old Jesus, playing at the ford of a brook, 'gathered together into pools the water that flowed by, and made it once clean, and commanded it by his word alone'. Then 'he made soft clay and fashioned from it twelve sparrows', who later, at his word, flew away. Jesus thus imitates his Father's work in creation, gathering the waters and creating living things. The fact that these miracles occur on a Sabbath indicates that he claims his Father's prerogative to give life on the Sabbath, as the adult Jesus does in John 5.

Later writings in the tradition of the *Protevangelium of James* and the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, especially the Latin apocryphal *Gospel of Matthew* (usually known as Pseudo-Matthew) which was very influential in the medieval west, drew on both works, taking over most of their contents and supplementing them in order to tell a continuous story from the birth of Mary through the childhood of Jesus. Thus, even where the two second-century works themselves were not known, the stories they told continued to be told, as well as illustrated in art, throughout the medieval period and later.

Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles

The literary genre in which the narrative imagination of early Christianity was most extensively expressed was that of apostolic Acts (see Findlay 1923; Bovon 1981). The earliest of the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles date from the mid second century or even a little earlier, and such works

continued to be written for centuries in a tradition continued also to some extent in the lives of post-apostolic saints. Here we shall focus on the five oldest of these Acts, written between the early second and early third centuries: the Acts of John (Bremmer 1995), Andrew (Prieur 1989; Pao 1995; Bremmer 2000), Peter (Perkins 1994; Bremmer 1998), Paul (Brock 1994; Bremmer 1996) and Thomas (Tissot 1988; Bremmer 2001). (This may be the chronological order, but, although there are undoubtedly literary connections between some of these works and influences of some on others, the directions of dependence and influence are not agreed, and the chronological sequence is therefore quite debatable.) Only in the case of the *Acts of Thomas* has the complete text survived (probably best in the Greek version, although the work was probably composed in Syriac). In the other four cases, the text has to be reconstructed – with more or less confidence and with larger or smaller lacunae – from fragments and later adaptations of parts of the text, so that in no case do we have a complete text, though in most cases a large proportion is reasonably secure. These five texts were put together as a corpus only in the fourth century by the Manicheans, but they have evident affinities.

These various Acts are similar in that each narrates the final part of the apostolic ministry of the apostle in question, ending with his death (martyrdom except in the case of John, who dies peacefully). The *Acts of Thomas* begins with a scene in Jerusalem in which the nations of the world are divided among the apostles and India is allotted to Thomas. Thomas, despite his initial unwillingness to accept this allocation, travels by sea to India, where the rest of the work is set. The *Acts of Andrew* probably began with the same scene in Jerusalem, with Andrew receiving Achaea as his allotted mission field, and went on to describe Andrew's travels in northern Asia Minor and Greece, especially Philippi, Corinth and Patras, where he suffers martyrdom. The original form of the *Acts of Peter* evidently also began in Jerusalem, where Peter is said to have stayed for twelve years after the resurrection; in the surviving text, we are told only of his voyage to Rome and his ministry there. The *Acts of Paul* relates the apostle's travels in much the same areas as those which feature in the account of Paul in the canonical Acts, ending with a journey from Corinth to Italy and Paul's martyrdom in Rome. This has usually been understood as an alternative account of Paul's missionary career, paralleling that of the canonical Acts, but it can also plausibly be seen as a sequel to Acts, narrating travels Paul was believed to have undertaken between the end of Luke's narrative and his later return to Rome (see Bauckham 1993). Finally, the *Acts of John* tells of the apostle's ministry in Ephesus and other cities of the province of Asia, concluding with his death in Ephesus. The beginning of the narrative is lost, but the fact that John is depicted as an older man implies that only the final period of his life was covered.

The apocryphal Acts and the canonical Acts of the Apostles

These five works are each distinctive in structure, style, content and ideology, but they also have much in common and clearly constitute a genre of literature not quite like anything else, although they have been and can be profitably compared with several other types of ancient literature. They are certainly modelled to varying degrees on the canonical Acts of the Apostles. It was Luke's work, especially when read as a work distinct from Luke's Gospel, that structured salvation history in such a way as to make the missionary activity of an apostle, beginning at some point after the resurrection, readily conceivable as a narrative unity. None of the apocryphal Acts narrate – except in flashbacks in speeches – either the early lives of the apostles or their time with the earthly Jesus. For this reason, they cannot be classified simply as biographies. They are biographical only in a special sense determined by the Christian concept of the role of an apostle in salvation history. On the other hand, they are more biographical than is the canonical Acts. Even though Luke's narrative focuses almost exclusively on Paul in the second half of Acts, the fact that it ends at the point it does shows that the interest in Paul is subordinated to a non-biographical conception of the work as a whole. The fact that each of the apocryphal Acts tells one apostle's story and ends it with his death demonstrates a more biographical interest, which is in line with the growing popularity of biographical works in the

period when the apocryphal Acts were written. To second-century Christians, the canonical Acts seemed unfinished in that it did not continue its story as far as Paul's death, while Peter and John both disappear from its narrative at early stages without explanation. It is easy to see how, to a more biographical interest than Luke's, his Acts seemed in need of completion and supplementation.

A striking feature which distinguishes the *Acts of Paul* in particular from Luke's narrative of Paul and aligns the former with Graeco-Roman biography in a way that is not true of Acts, is the inclusion of a physical description of Paul. Such descriptions were a standard feature of Greek and Roman biography. They are often conventional to some degree, reflecting the theories of physiognomics, which were popular in the second century and understood physical features as revelatory of character and aptitudes (see Malherbe 1986; Malina and Neyrey 1996: 100–52). The Roman historian Suetonius' physical descriptions of the emperors, for example, are determined as much by physiognomical theory as by the actual appearances of the emperors, even when these were readily available in the form of statues and images on coins. The description of Paul in the *Acts of Paul* – short, bald, bowlegged, with meeting eyebrows and a somewhat hooked nose – is to a large extent conventional and was certainly not unflattering as it appears to modern readers. Bowleggedness and meeting eyebrows were admired, the hooked nose was a sign of magnanimity, and a moderately small stature indicated quickness of intelligence (since the blood flowed more quickly around a small area and more quickly reached the heart, the seat of intelligence). The only feature which is surprising is the bald head, which might therefore reflect an historical reminiscence.

Despite the more biographical character of the apocryphal Acts, it was the Lukan Acts that provided for them the model of an episodic travel-narrative, including the deeds, especially miracles, and the words of an apostle, which all the apocryphal Acts follow to some extent, those of Paul and Andrew most fully. It is not surprising that the *Acts of Paul* resembles the canonical Acts more than any other of the apocryphal Acts, but in one respect the *Acts of John* is more similar. While its narrative is for the most part told in the third person, there are passages in the first-person plural, which begin and end unaccountably in the midst of third-person narrative. This phenomenon is not easily explicable except as a deliberate imitation of the 'we-passages' of Acts. Unlike Acts, the *Acts of John* also uses the first-person singular, though only on two or three occasions (61; 73; 86?). The implied author is evidently one of John's close companions who travel with him, much like Luke's role in the canonical Acts according to the traditional understanding of the 'we-passages'. The beginning of the *Acts of John*, which might have identified the pseudonym to whom the first-person accounts were attributed, is not extant, but this supposed disciple of John may well have been Leucius, to whom all five of the apocryphal Acts were later attributed, but who is also attested as particularly related to John. (It has been suggested that the name was chosen for its similarity to the name Luke, suggesting a role parallel to that of Luke in his Acts.) The *Acts of Peter* also contains very brief occurrences of the first-person plural in the midst of third-person narrative, which are probably remnants of a wider usage in the original text. While the *Acts of Peter* differs both from the canonical Acts and from the other apocryphal Acts in that it seems to have contained only one journey by the apostle – from Jerusalem to Rome – it is related to the canonical Acts in a different way: Peter's conflict with Simon Magus (Acts 8) is continued and brought to a dramatic climax in Rome. The work ends with the crucifixion of Peter – but upside down at his request, a scene commemorated in many European paintings (see Figure 37.3).

Alongside these forms of dependence on the Lukan Acts, the apocryphal Acts also share significant differences from the canonical Acts. Their more biographical character has already been noticed. The miracles the apostles perform are, in general, more dramatic and impressive than those of the canonical Acts. Miracles of resurrection are especially common, and seem to be related to an understanding of conversion as rising to new life, which is not to be found in the canonical Acts. The predominance of upper-class characters, among both converts and opponents of the apostles, is not paralleled in Luke's Acts, neither are the stories, recurrent in the apocryphal Acts, of betrothed or married people, especially women, who practise sexual abstinence as part of their new Christian lifestyle. While the

Figure 37.3 The martyrdom of Peter, detail from a painting by Filippino Lippi in the Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence; Wikicommons

canonical Acts contains episodes of excitement and adventure, such as Peter's escape from prison or Paul's sea voyage and shipwreck, intended to entertain while also instructing readers, the stories in the apocryphal Acts have far more sensational and fantastic elements: murder, parricide, self-castration, necrophilia, suicide, murderous demons, talking animals (even converted ones), a flying magician, a visit to hell, close encounters with wild animals in the amphitheatre, miraculous escape from execution by fire. Readerly pleasure is served by both melodramatic and humorous episodes, sometimes deliberately alternated. Among the light-hearted stories are the tale of the bed-bugs in the *Acts of John*, in which the apostle procures an uninterrupted night's sleep at an inn by banishing the bed-bugs temporarily from the bed, and the story which the *Acts of Andrew*, employing a stock motif, tells of a wife who abstained from sexual relations with her husband by substituting her maid for herself in the marital bed.

The apocryphal Acts and the Greek novel

The elements of travel, upper-class setting, prominent female characters, adventure and excitement have prompted comparison with the Greek novel (or romance). The novel proper, i.e. the erotic novel (such as Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe* or Xenophon's *Ephesiaca*), whose popularity seems to have been at its height in the period when the apocryphal Acts were written, tells a story of two lovers who remain faithful to each other through separations, trials and dangerous adventures, before arriving at a happy and final reunion. To some degree these novels carry a moral message as well as being designed for maximum entertainment. In that sense, the combination of entertainment and edification at which the apocryphal Acts seem to aim brings them close to the erotic novel. Moreover, the stories – to be found in all the apocryphal Acts – of upper-class women who forsake their husbands or deny conjugal rights to their husbands in order to follow the apostle's teaching, employ an erotic motif which could be seen as paralleling and subverting the themes of faithful love and sexual consummation around which the plots of the novels revolve. But these similarities are not sufficient to place the apocryphal Acts in the genre of the novel. Travel, for example, which in the plots of the novels functions to separate the lovers, serves a quite different purpose in the apocryphal Acts, where the travels are those of a Christian apostle charged with a mission of evangelism and care of the churches. More generally, the novels concern individuals in their private capacities, and their plots are limited to the personal lives and emotions of these individuals, whereas the apocryphal Acts portray the apostles as public figures, whose mission belongs to the purpose of God for the world and affects whole populations and regions. However much the emotions and aspirations of individuals are stressed in the stories these Acts tell, especially of conversions, such private affairs take their place in an overall story of public significance.

What we can conclude, from the features they share with the Greek novels, is that the apocryphal Acts may well have appealed – and were designed to appeal – to a readership similar to that of the novels. Unfortunately, the nature of that readership is debatable. The view that the novels were a relatively popular literature, circulating more widely than other literary works, and attracting especially a female audience, has been challenged by the evidence of surviving papyrus fragments, whose relative numbers do not support the hypothesis of wide circulation, and by the observation that the literary sophistication of the novels presupposes not only a literate audience, but an educated one. On the other hand, it is likely that the novels which have survived are those of higher literary quality and sophistication, while the relatively unsophisticated apocryphal Acts (with the exception of the *Acts of Thomas*) resemble, in this respect, a somewhat more popular level of novelistic writing. The prominence of upper-class characters, including women who exercise considerable initiative and independence, cannot prove that either the novels or the apocryphal Acts were intended to appeal only to readers of the same class and gender. Popular literature often features characters from the social élite. (Marcellus, the Christian senator who appears prominently in the *Acts of Peter* is unlikely to correspond to any historical Christians who were members of the Roman senate at the time of writing.) But it is reasonable to assume that the target audience included women who would find a variety of strong female characters to identify with, and who, in households wealthy enough to have educated slaves, would have slaves to read to them for entertainment.

If we envisage the apocryphal Acts as intended primarily to attract outsiders to the faith, and only secondarily to edify believers, we can easily understand the literary resemblances to the novels. If the targeted audience were primarily the literate élite, this does not mean that the apocryphal Acts pander to aristocratic prejudice. On the contrary, such frequent themes as the disobedience of upper-class Christian wives to their husbands, and the apostle's conflict with civil and religious authorities, usually ending in martyrdom, are aimed against established order, while some of the Acts, especially those of Peter, encourage a kind of solidarity with the poor and marginal that was both alien to the élite of the Greco-Roman world and also early Christianity's most distinctive socio-economic concern. Unlike the *Protevangelium of James*, the *Acts of Peter* provides no refutation of the dismissive description of Jesus it puts on the lips of Simon Magus: 'Jesus the Nazarene, the son of a carpenter and a carpenter himself'.

Before leaving the subject of the resemblances between the apocryphal Acts and the Greek novel, we should observe that one section of one of these Acts bears a much closer resemblance. The story of Thecla in the *Acts of Paul* (which later circulated as an independent narrative work, the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, no doubt in the interests of the cult of Thecla) must be seen as a deliberate small-scale equivalent to one of the erotic novels. Thecla, like the heroines of the novels, is a beautiful young woman of aristocratic birth who preserves her chastity and remains faithful to her beloved through trials and dangers in which she comes close to death but experiences divine deliverance. She escapes two unwanted and malevolent suitors, Thamyris and Alexander, as do the heroines of the novels. Unlike these heroines, her chastity is not, of course, temporary but permanent, and represents her total devotion to God. But her devotion to God is also devotion to his apostle Paul, who preaches sexual abstinence as essential to the Christian way. This devotion to Paul is depicted in terms which are certainly not to be read as sexual, but nevertheless parallel erotic passion. As in the case of the heroes and heroines of the novels, the plot partly turns on the separation of Paul and Thecla, her search for and reunion with him. When she offers to cut her hair short in order to follow him everywhere and when she adopts male dress to travel in search of Paul, these may not be primarily signs of her liberation from patriarchal structures, though there is no doubt that she is so liberated, but rather echoes of the novelistic theme of a woman travelling in male disguise in order to escape detection. It seems clear that Thecla's story has been directly modelled on the Greek novel, both in order to entertain a readership similar to that enjoyed by the novels but also in order to express the message of sexual continence for the sake of devotion to God in an attractively symbolic way.

The apocryphal Acts and novelistic biography

The Greek novels were pure fiction, even if they originated as imitations of historiography and were apt to use some of the conventions of historiography (Morgan and Stoneman 1994; Holzberg 1995). While it is hard to believe that the frequently tall stories of the apocryphal Acts were taken entirely literally by, at least, their more sophisticated readers, nevertheless it seems unlikely that their authors would have been happy for them to be regarded as wholly fictional. At least the apostles themselves were real historical figures. This suggests that in search of the literary affinities of the apocryphal Acts, we should return to the category of biography, which we introduced when observing that these Acts are more biographical in form than the canonical Acts.

Momigliano makes this important comment on ancient biography:

> The borderline between fiction and reality was thinner in biography than in ordinary historiography. What readers expected in biography was probably different from what they expected in political history. They wanted information about the education, the love affairs, and the character of their heroes. But these things are less easily documented than wars and political reforms. If biographers wanted to keep their public, they had to resort to fiction.
>
> *(Momigliano 1971: 56–57)*

This comment needs qualification in the sense that some biographies were as scrupulously historical as the best ancient historiography. Indeed, one can perhaps speak of the emergence, by the time of writing of the apocryphal Acts, of two genres of biography: the historical, which remained close to good historical method, and the (for want of a better word) novelistic, which, while using sources, allowed more or less freedom to creative imagination. It is instructive to compare the works of a contemporary of some of the authors of the apocryphal Acts: Flavius Philostratus. His *Lives of the Sophists*, dependent on oral sources, no doubt share the limitations of the sources, but in these Philostratus does not indulge in free invention. Quite different is his *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. Here the point where novelistic creativity takes over from history is impossible to determine, and scholars differ over whether even Philostratus' supposed source, Damis, is a novelistic invention. A quite different example of the same kind of contrast is between the histories of Alexander the Great and the freely imaginative Alexander romance.

There is no doubt that if we are to associate the apocryphal Acts with ancient biography, then it is with the semi-fictional, novelistic biography that we should associate them. This is a category which made some claim to be historiography, but which allowed very wide scope for various kinds of historical imagination. Readers who put the apocryphal Acts in this category would expect them to be biographies of real historical persons, but would also expect a considerable and indeterminate admixture of fiction. Given only sparse historical details for their imagination to work on, authors of such works would be expected to make the most of these but not to be constrained by them. Entertainment and edification required an approach much more flexible than the methods of more scrupulous kinds of historiography.

Scholars have found it difficult to classify Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* generically. It seems to be a combination of biography with the novel. But, rather than confusing its genre with that of the novel proper, it would be more appropriate to say that this example of novelistic biography borrows themes from the novel proper, just as the *Acts of Paul* does. The way in which erotic subplots are included in the story of the ascetic philosopher Apollonius, presumably to appeal to the same kind of readership as enjoyed the novels, is parallel to, though not the same as, the way erotic themes are introduced into the apocryphal Acts. The semi-fictional or novelistic biography can be influenced by the novel proper, but it is not this influence that makes it semi-fictional. It is in any case a semi-fictional genre, novelistic in its own way. What the influence of the novel in this case illustrates is

the way the novelistic biography was a genre particularly hospitable to influence from other genres. Such hospitality helps us to understand the variety of literary elements that go to make up the various apocryphal Acts (e.g. the *Acts of Paul* contains letters passed between Paul and the Corinthian church; the *Acts of John* contains virtually a short gospel; the *Acts of Thomas* contains poems and hymns; the *Acts of Andrew* shows particular affinities with the biographies of philosophers; folktale motifs are evident in some of the stories in the various Acts).

The *Life of Apollonius*, written in the early third century, tells the story of a first-century philosopher in a way which is based in history but is also freely imaginative. Another example is the *Life of Secundus the Philosopher* (Perry 1964). Secundus, put to death by Hadrian for keeping to his vow of silence in defiance of the emperor's command to speak, also lived at roughly the same chronological remove from his biography as the apostles did from the time of composition of their apocryphal Acts. The plainly novelistic story which his *Life* tells to explain his vow of silence is plausibly understood as a sensational story woven around the historical fact of the philosopher's silence, which would no doubt have been actually connected with Pythagorean asceticism. That Secundus is portrayed, like the apostles, as a martyr also illustrates how in this period stories of heroic deaths for philosophical or religious principle appealed to both pagans and Christians. The martyrdoms of the apostles at the conclusions of the apocryphal Acts could serve the propagandist aims of these Acts, just as historical martyrdoms in the amphitheatres and elsewhere did.

The apocryphal Acts are best described, then, as works of novelistic biographical character (not strictly biographies) suited to the telling of the story of a Christian apostle and defined as the semi-fictional narrative of the missionary activity of an apostle subsequent to the resurrection of Jesus and ending with the apostle's death. While modelled in part on the canonical Acts, they are at once more biographical and more fictional than the canonical Acts. They partake in several ways in the literary currents of the period in which they originated, a period in which biography in general and the novelistic biography in particular were popular, as was the erotic novel and the martyrology (whether as an element in biography or as a distinct genre).

Apocryphal Acts and Jewish 'rewritten' Bible texts

One further category of literature belongs to the literary context which accounts for the particular features of the apocryphal Acts. In discussion of the *Protevangelium of James* we have already encountered the tradition of Jewish narrative works which retell the biblical histories, explaining and expanding the biblical text with the imaginative development of stories about the biblical characters. Such works include both those which retell the biblical story with creative expansions (e.g. *Jubilees*, Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*, Artapanus) and those which tell largely extra-biblical stories about biblical characters (e.g. *Joseph and Aseneth*, *Jannes and Jambres*). This Jewish literature was widely read by Christians in the early centuries of Christianity. (In fact, most of it has been preserved only through Christian channels of transmission.) Most Christians who read, enjoyed and were instructed by it did not regard it as canonical scripture, as they regarded the Old Testament. Such Jewish works could well have suggested how the writings of the emerging New Testament canon could be extended (as by the *Acts of Paul* and the *Acts of Peter*) or supplemented (as by the *Acts of John* and the *Acts of Andrew*) by extra-canonical stories about the apostles. Some of these Jewish works use various forms of exegesis of the biblical text as the starting point and stimulus for exercises in historical imagination, while others are more straightforwardly fictional creations.

We can observe both types among the apocryphal Acts. When its relationship to the canonical Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline letter corpus (including the Pastorals) is carefully studied, it becomes evident that the *Acts of Paul* uses many of the usual Jewish exegetical practices to explain and to expand the available information about the period of Paul's missionary activity the author believed to have intervened between the end of Acts and the apostle's martyrdom (see Bauckham 1993). (It should also be noted that some of these techniques were also used by hellenistic biographers of

writers, faced with the need to eke out the minimal historical data available to them and to develop entertaining stories about their subjects: see Lefkowitz 1981.) The same kinds of methods as we observed in the case of the *Protevangelium of James* can also be identified in the *Acts of Paul*. References to persons and events in the Pastoral epistles, for example, are the basis for the creation of stories which explain them. Persons with the same names are identified. Metaphorical references, such as Paul's references to fighting with wild animals in Ephesus (1 Cor. 15:32) and being delivered from the lion's mouth (2 Tim. 4:17), are taken literally and an appropriate story created to explain them (Paul is thrown to the wild animals in the amphitheatre of Ephesus and escapes death when the lion turns out to be one he had befriended on an earlier occasion). New stories are formed on the model of existing ones, similar but also deliberately different. For example, Luke's story about Eutychus (Acts 20:7–12) inspires another story about the emperor's cup-bearer Patroclus in the *Acts of Paul*. The latter is not, as some have argued, a variant of the same oral tradition as Luke knew, but an example of a well-evidenced literary practice of modelling new stories on old, especially new stories about biblical characters on biblical stories about the same or other characters. While this practice is rare in the other apocryphal Acts, the comparable practice of modelling a new story about one apostle on a story about another apostle in his apocryphal Acts is common, and accounts for the various narrative motifs which, unknown elsewhere, recur in these texts. (Of course, the repetition of narrative motifs was common in all forms of ancient narrative literature, and, when used in historiography, did not impair historical credibility as it would for modern readers.) In comparison with the *Acts of Paul*, the other apocryphal Acts clearly had far less biographical data about their respective apostles already available to base their creative storytelling on, but there are a few other examples of exegetical imagination. The famous 'Quo Vadis?' story in the *Acts of Peter* is probably inspired by John 13:36–37. In the main, the non-Pauline apocryphal Acts resorted to narrative invention unrelated to New Testament texts.

Evangelism or edification

We have already raised the question whether the apocryphal Acts are evangelistic works envisaging pagan readers and seeking their conversion, or whether they are edificatory works for established believers. There are several indications of the former. The entertaining nature of these works as narrative literature may well be calculated to appeal to outsiders who enjoyed similarly entertaining narrative literature of other types, though there is no reason to think that Christian readers would not also appreciate this feature of the Acts. Many of the stories in the Acts are stories of the conversion of individuals or a group of related individuals to faith. There are more than thirty such stories in the five apocryphal Acts (including the restoration of apostate believers in the *Acts of Peter*), as well as general references to the conversions of large numbers of people through the miracles and preaching of the apostles. In many cases, the miracle stories, which are so plentiful in the apocryphal Acts, function as demonstrations of the Christian God's power to deliver, to heal, to raise the dead, to outdo his demonic or human opponents, in such a way as to lead to the conversion of people who experience or witness these miracles.

This is probably the main reason why miracles of resurrection are so common in the apocryphal Acts (at least twelve such miracles in conversion stories). It is not simply that they are a particularly impressive form of miracle, but that they demonstrate the Christian God's power over life and death, and point to the eternal life that he gives to those who believe in Jesus. Like the raising of Lazarus in John 11, the miracles of resurrection point beyond the mere resuscitation to mortal life which is their physical effect, and function as signs of resurrection to eternal life, effected by God for the convert. As in John 11 (which has probably influenced the *Acts of John*), this coheres with the emphasis, in the *Acts of John* and the *Acts of Thomas*, on eternal life as Christian experience in the present. The *Acts of John* in particular interprets its resurrection stories with a theological understanding of conversion as resurrection from the state of death in which the sinful and unconverted person is. They are parables of the need to die in order to live. As the characters in the story recognize this, we should expect that the implied reader should also understand and experience conversion.

However, while many of the conversion stories seem designed for outsiders to the faith, it is not clear that we can generalize about the aims of the apocryphal Acts. Conversion stories are less prominent in the *Acts of Paul*, which often portrays Paul ministering to established churches. The *Acts of Thomas* is a work of considerable literary sophistication and theological depth, whose seemingly simple narratives are packed with symbolic and typological significance. It may well be a work designed to be read at more than one level or in a process of increasing penetration through the entertaining surface to the profounder message. Lallemann (1998) argues that while the miracles stories and missionary preaching in the *Acts of John* aim at the conversion of outsiders, the Gnostic section which is not original to the work (chapters 97–102) aims to initiate readers, who may well be non-Gnostic Christians, into a Gnostic understanding of Christ and salvation.

This Gnostic section of the *Acts of John* is polemical in the sense that it expresses contempt for the non-Gnostic Christians who do not – and, indeed, cannot – understand the true mystery. Only one other section of the apocryphal Acts seems to be written as propaganda for one form of Christianity against another. This is the correspondence between Paul and the Corinthian church in the *Acts of Paul*, whose polemic runs in the exact opposite direction from that of the *Acts of John*. The Corinthians are troubled by teachers of Gnostic heresy which Paul rejects and refutes. But this polemic against Gnosticism is confined to this section of the *Acts of Paul*, and cannot be understood as the overall aim of the work. The *Acts of Peter* gives much attention to Peter's restoration of Christians who have been led into apostasy by Simon Magus, but since there is virtually no account of Simon's teaching the work can scarcely be understood as polemic against heresy. In general, the apocryphal Acts do not seem to aim at winning Christians of a different persuasion to their own brand of Christianity. Their polemic is confined to paganism, and their aims seem to be the conversion of pagans to the faith and the (non-polemical) edification of believers in the faith. The balance of these two elements evidently varies from one work to another.

Asceticism and dualism

The Christian way entails the renunciation of the things of this world. This theme is common to all the apocryphal Acts, as to most Christianity of the period in which they were written. Such renunciation includes contempt for wealth and luxury and worldly honour, and may also include frugality in diet (it is a peculiarity of eucharistic celebrations in the apocryphal Acts that wine is not used), but its most prominent feature in the apocryphal Acts is sexual abstinence. Most of the apostles in them preach the ideal of complete celibacy, and many stories illustrate this preaching and its socially disruptive effects.

A story which survives only as a fragment but probably belonged to the lost first part of the original *Acts of Peter* tells of the apostle's daughter. To save her from an unwanted suitor who abducted her, she was miraculously paralysed on one side of her body from head to toe. She remains so until someone asks Peter, who heals all others brought to him for healing, why he does not heal his own daughter. Peter does then heal her in order to show that God is able to do so, but at once restores the paralysis. The reason is that the girl is too beautiful for her own good, and needs the paralysis to protect her. Extreme as this story is, it should be remembered as counter-evidence to the claim that sexual abstinence functions in the apocryphal Acts as a form of female autonomy and liberation from male dominance.

More typical are stories of women who, under the influence of the apostle's preaching, abandon sexual relations with their husbands. In some cases, the husband is won over to the same practice, but in three cases (Andrew, Peter, Thomas) it is a story of this kind that leads to the apostle's martyrdom. Thecla is the most prominent example of an unmarried woman who, against all the pressures of family and society, succeeds in remaining unmarried, as the apostle's teaching requires of her. The extent to which the Acts regard such sexual abstinence as necessary is debatable, and probably varies to some extent from one work to another. The *Acts of Thomas* seems the most emphatic in considering sexual

activity wholly incompatible with Christian faith and salvation, and in this it reflects the encratite (from *enkrateia*, continence) Christianity of its context of origin, the second-century Christian tradition of the east Syrian area. In other Acts, there are married couples who do not seem to be required to abstain from normal marital relations, but there is no doubt that celibacy is an ideal expressing the Christian's absolute devotion to God.

It is important to notice, however, that the theological context in which this sexual asceticism is understood is different in each case. The stories of sexual abstinence are a prime example of the way narrative motifs pass from one to another of these works, but serve subtly or even obviously different theological agendas in each case. In the *Acts of Paul*, the theological context is a kind of eschatological radicalism based especially on 1 Corinthians 7 ('Blessed are those who have wives as if they had them not'). The dualism involved is the eschatological dualism of this world and the next, not at all a matter-spirit dualism. Sexual abstinence implies no depreciation of the body. On the contrary, it keeps the body pure ('Blessed are they who have kept the flesh pure, for they shall become a temple of God'). Not the body but passions that defile the body are evil. So there is no contradiction involved when the Paul of the *Acts of Paul* also, in correspondence with the Corinthians, decisively condemns the Gnostic dualism which denies that God created the human body, that Christ has come in the flesh and that there will be a resurrection of the flesh.

The much more developed theology of the *Acts of Thomas* is not dissimilar. Sexuality is bound up not with the body as such, but with death (since it is death that makes procreation necessary), sickness and other evils of the flesh which became part of human life at the fall. Sexual continence is restoration of the condition of Adam and Eve in paradise, and is associated with immortality. Enormous importance is attached to *enkrateia* because it is the key point in human life at which the forces of evil, which plague human life, can be resisted and overcome. The dualism here is between the transitory and the eternal, but not between the material and spiritual. In the *Acts of Andrew*, on the other hand, there is clear influence from the matter-spirit dualism with which the transitory-eternal dualism was associated in Greek philosophical traditions: Platonism and neo-Pythagoreanism. Salvation is the liberation of the soul, which is of divine origin, from the captivity of the body, and its reunion with God. Only through common affinities with Platonism does the *Acts of Andrew* resemble Gnosticism, but its Greek philosophical flavour, distinctive among the apocryphal Acts, differs markedly from the mythological idiom of Gnosticism.

Gnosticism itself is found only in that section of the *Acts of John* that is probably to be regarded as an addition to the original text: chapters 97–102. Here the cosmos is not the creation of the high and good God, but of an evil demiurge, who is identified with the God of the Old Testament, while the human spirit of the Gnostic is alien to the body and the material world, discovering in gnosis its true home in the world above. This radical cosmic dualism, which characterizes Gnosticism in the useful sense of that term, is confined, among the apocryphal Acts, to this section of the *Acts of John*. While the rest of the *Acts of John* displays a spiritualizing tendency, stressing the new life of the spirit rather than the flesh, and so would have been congenial to a Gnostic editor, it does not espouse the radical cosmic dualism of the Gnostic section. On the other hand, there are no allusions to the Old Testament in the whole of the *Acts of John*, and thorough-going rejection of the Old Testament was distinctive of Gnosticism. The Gnostic character of the form of the *Acts of John* that we have may not be entirely confined to the clearly Gnostic section.

With these various forms of dualism are associated a variety of christologies in the various Acts. In the *Acts of Andrew*, insofar as the text can be reconstructed, there is no reference at all to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Christ is indistinguishable from God, and it is the apostle Andrew who is both the revealer and the embodiment of salvation. In the *Acts of John* and (probably derivatively) in the *Acts of Peter*, with some traces also in the *Acts of Thomas*, is found a distinctive polymorphous Christology, which attributes to Christ no fixed form of earthly appearance, but one that changes at will, so that he is seen, even in his earthly life and even at the same time, in different forms by different people. The function of this in the *Acts of John* is clearly to remove the divine Christ from any real

incarnation. This is a fully docetic Christology, whose Christ is explicitly not human at all. However, the same motif is differently interpreted in the much more 'orthodox' but rather eclectic *Acts of Peter*. Here the milder docetism that is found also in the Alexandrian Fathers – a Jesus who did not need to eat or drink but did so for our sakes – understands the polymorphy as Christ's accommodation of himself to the capacities of the people he met. Once again, we see a literary motif passed from one of the apocryphal Acts to another, but its significance shifting according to the theological outlook of the work in question.

Women in the apocryphal Acts

We have already noted the prominence of women, especially aristocratic women, among the converts to Christian faith in all of the apocryphal Acts, and the adoption of sexual continence by many of them. Some recent scholarship (see Davies 1980; MacDonald 1983; Burrus 1987) has given this feature of the Acts a strongly feminist interpretation, understanding celibacy as a form of liberation for women from the patriarchal structures of marriage and the family. It was the one way in which women could exercise autonomy and independence. The Acts are then thought to reflect circles of female ascetics in second-century Christianity, whose form of Christian life ran deliberately counter both to the patriarchal structures of society in general and to male-dominated forms of Christianity. Female authorship of some of the Acts, notably the *Acts of Paul*, or oral storytelling in circles of Christian women as the source of the stories about women in the apocryphal Acts, have been postulated (Kaestli 1990). These latter hypotheses are particularly fragile, since there is no good reason to doubt Tertullian's evidence that the author of the *Acts of Paul* was male, while our observations earlier about the literary modelling of stories on other stories in the apocryphal Acts themselves and the difficulty of detecting oral forms behind literary versions of stories, make guesses about traditions behind them perilous.

The general approach of the apocryphal Acts to marriage does not, in fact, seem to be opposed to the patriarchal structure of marriage as such but to the sexual relationship within marriage. Certainly, Christian wives intent on sexual continence are defying their husbands' authority in a way that the narratives approve. We should not forget that being a Christian wife to a non-Christian husband was itself a quite serious defiance of the patriarchal structure of marriage and one to which all forms of Christianity were committed. In the stories in the apocryphal Acts, this assertion of the right to be a Christian by the wife of an unconverted husband is intensified and dramatized (in a way that makes for engaging narratives) by giving it the form of refusing sexual relations. That women among the social élite converted more readily than their husbands (for whom social impediments were a greater obstacle) is true to the social realities of Christianity at the time, and the narratives of the apocryphal Acts no doubt encourage such women to persevere bravely and to hope for their husbands' conversion. But it must also be noticed that in the apocryphal Acts marriage is no longer a problem when both partners are Christian and both agree to live together without sexual relations. This shows that the authority structure of marriage is seen as problematic only when profession and faithful practice of the Christian way by the wife are opposed by the husband.

However, in the case of Thecla, we can find some truth in the feminist interpretation. This story instantiates the preference for the unmarried state for the sake of the gospel and the equal rights of women and men to remain unmarried that Paul, at his most socially radical, expresses in 1 Corinthians 7. (The influence of this text on the Thecla story has not been sufficiently appreciated.) As an independent, unmarried woman she is no more subordinated to Paul's authority than his male disciples are, and she soon moves on to her own mission field and a lifetime of 'enlightening many with the word of God'. It was to this feature of the *Acts of Paul* that Tertullian objected, complaining of women who appealed to Thecla's example in order to defend the right of women to teach and to baptize (*De baptismo* 17). Whether this was the reason why, as he relates, the presbyter who wrote the work was condemned and deposed, is not clear. It certainly did not prevent the *Acts of Paul* remaining a popular work among Christians in general for quite some time after Tertullian wrote.

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PART VIII

External challenges

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38

POLITICAL OPPRESSION AND MARTYRDOM

Candida R. Moss

Throughout the Christian era it has baffled many that the normally reserved and well-thought-of Romans could ever have persecuted the Christians. As Ludwig Mosheim put it in the eighteenth century, 'How it was that the excellent nature of the Christian religion, its admirable tendency to promote both the welfare of the state and the private felicity of individuals' should have invited persecution rather than protection and admiration (1767: 48)? Not only were Romans known for their religious tolerance in general, but there is also considerable overlap between the ethics of both groups. Despite this it is true that, despite all apparent logic and good sense, Roman society marginalized Christians and occasionally targeted them.

Similarly befuddling, to modern readers, is the willingness and even eagerness to pursue martyrdom and purposefully alienate Roman authorities. The passion with which Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, wrote to the Christians of Rome beseeching them not to intervene to prevent his death evokes strong reactions from readers. It not only seems alien; it seems suicidal.

In describing the history of the political oppression and martyrdom of early Christians we are, therefore, faced with two tasks: the first is to explain the genesis of martyrdom in Christianity: how was martyrdom theologically powerful for early Christians? The second is to describe and account for the actions of the Romans: why, when, and under what circumstances did Romans target Christians?

This task is complicated by the nature of the evidence. The majority of Christian stories describing the deaths of Christians in the second to fourth centuries CE were edited, if not composed, after persecution had ended (Moss 2013). We are dealing not with eyewitness accounts of legal procedures, but with stories that shape memories and create identity for later generations of Christians. The prevalence of the refrain 'I am a Christian' demonstrates the extent to which Christian histories of martyrdom are about identity formation (Boyarin 1999; Castelli 2004).

Greco-Roman and Jewish influences

Among scholars there has been considerable debate about the wellspring of the ideology of martyrdom. Some argue that martyrdom is distinctive to Christianity; that while it has antecedents in Judaism, Greco-Roman philosophy, and epic myth, it took on a new form among the followers of Jesus. Classicist Glen Bowersock is typical when he says: 'Martyrdom was not something that the ancient world had seen from the beginning. What we can observe in the second, third, and fourth centuries of our era is something entirely new' (Bowersock 1995: 17).

The ancient Greek and Roman love of death is well documented in classical literature and modern historiography. This 'noble death tradition,' as it is frequently called, is often associated with philosophy. Certainly, the question: 'What makes a death good?' produced stimulating dinner party conversation among the intellectual elite, where it permeated discussions about honor, masculinity, and patriotism. Ideas about and examples of good death were not confined, however, to the academy: they are implicit in the rituals surrounding sacrifice, in which a compliant sacrificial animal was a good omen; in the dramatic deaths of the heroes and heroines of Greek theater and epic poetry; and in the anecdotes of the historians.

In an ambiguously apocryphal story from Herodotus's *Histories* (*c.* 425 BCE), Solon, the beloved founder of the Athenian laws, tells the hubristic Croesus that 'no man can be called happy until he is dead.' The prophetic warning is as much a statement about the role of death as it is a foreshadowing of Croesus's unhappy demise. Solon speaks of both the fragility of humankind on the unforgiving wheel of fortune and also the instrumental role that death plays in the evaluation of a person's life. Neither Herodotus nor Solon can be credited with the sentiment that lies behind this pithy turn of phrase. The pages of recorded Greek history are marked with the idea that a good death brings glory, memorialization, and immortality. The Homeric heroes of the Trojan War fight for honor and everlasting fame. As he slaughters the Trojan princes, Achilles schools them and the captivated Homeric audience that to die well they must not 'be piteous about it'; they must stand courageously, greeting the death that waits for every man. Even though the *Odyssey*'s Achilles bemoans his fate in the underworld, it was his initial decision to choose a brief, fiery, glorious death that enthralled ancient audiences (*Odyssey* 11.489–91).

The good death also provided an opportunity to prove, decisively, one's worth and manliness. Dying well with dignified self-control was long considered the mark of a good soldier. As Achilles says to Lykaon, when the Trojan prince clasps Achilles's knees and begs for mercy: 'Come, friend, face your death you too. And why are you so piteous about it?' (*Iliad* 21.122–23). Courage in the face of death is expected of heroes. The notion of manliness implicit in Homer's formulation of the good death is one of self-control and courage, in contrast to cowardly displays on the battlefield that are associated with womanly tears and girlish displays of emotion. We might note Menelaus's rebuke to the Achaean troops who had greeted his encouragement to embrace their destiny and honor won in death with a shameful, cowardly silence. Menelaus responds by calling the soldiers 'women, not men' (*Iliad* 7.95). Apuleius's Fotis also emphasizes the importance of masculinity in battle and death when she instructs Lucius to 'fight vigorously, for I will not retreat before you or turn my back on you. Stiffen up and close in for a vigorous frontal assault—if you are a man! Slay, for you are about to die' (*Metamorphoses* 2.17). Seneca's Achilles, likewise, elects to assume the mantle of manhood; he 'chose the sword and professed himself a man' (*Troades* 214).

The idea that dying a courageous death is both a sign of one's character and worth and a mark of manliness is related to the wider discussion of virtue in antiquity. The content of virtue is theorized by Greek and Roman philosophers and moralists, who articulate taxonomies of virtue in which the association of masculinity and self-mastery is everywhere implied (Kelley 2006: 723–47). The relationship is explicit in Plato, who lists prudence, justice, manliness, and self-control as the four principal virtues (*Phaed.* 69C), and is implicit in condemnations of excessive mourning as 'womanly' behavior in the letters of Seneca and in Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations*. Plutarch labels anger unmanly and connects it to women (*On Controlling Anger* 475B), and Seneca agrees that anger is a womanish and childish weakness (*On Anger* 1.20). Certainly, for some authors, not emotion itself, but excessive emotion, is the larger problem. The salient point, however, is that *virtus* and manliness are inextricably linked.

The gendering of self-control provided a standard for the evaluation of the heroism of one's subjects. In Roman culture men were not born; they were made. It was the exercise of masculinity that distinguished the born male (*mas*) and the human (*homo*) from the man (*vir*). This distinction resonates strongly with the account of the death of the Christian bishop Polycarp, whose refusal of nails and easy embrace of suffering mark him as a hero. The heavenly voice that urges Polycarp

to 'play the man' (*Mart. Pol.* 9.1) is greeted with a muscular display of Christianity. Dying nobly became the prime location for the display of *virtus* and, thus, of masculinity. In the Roman period, as Catharine Edwards has demonstrated, as an opportunity to demonstrate self-restraint, courage, and clear-headedness, the noble death came to supplant military victory as the finest articulation of virtue (Edwards 2007).

Even among women—their powers normally limited to the bedroom and the household—dying well could transform one into a model of patriotism or heroism. Judith Perkins argues that early Christians constructed death as a kind of 'happy ending' and that, by adapting and subverting the conventions of the romance novel, they wedded Christians to death (Perkins 1995). Yet the use of marital and romantic imagery to describe a longing for death and to subvert traditional marriage is not unprecedented in Greek literature. Antigone, the much-loved heroine of Sophocles's Theban play, eschews her fiancé, and states that she belongs as a bride to Acheron (*Antigone* 758–59).

The influence of Iphigeneia, Polyxena, and Antigone—to say nothing of Portia and Lucretia—is discernible in the depiction of female martyrs in early Christianity. Female martyrs constituted a significant proportion of early Christian martyrs and generated some of the most thought-provoking and dearly beloved narratives. Few can forget the moving 'diary' of Perpetua and her account of her relationship with her family members, Felicitas's labor pains, or the slave girl Blandina's triumphant leadership of the martyrs of Lyons, during the mass martyrdom in that city of 177 CE (see Figure 38.1).

The presentation of the female martyr and the manner in which her actions undermine, transgress, and reinscribe Roman family values and gender norms have rightly occupied a generation of scholars. The gendering of biologically female martyrs in their trials, contests, and visions has been variously interpreted as instances of masculinization, glorification of the feminine, and a movement from one pole to another. Placed within the context of Greek drama, the actions of the female martyr conform in many important ways to Greek dramatic topoi of female resistance. Thus, if the portrayal of female martyrs functions as resistance to Roman familial and social structures, it is stylized using Greco-Roman dramatic and literary conventions. Perpetua's conduct in the tribunal and arena reproduces the iconic image of the tragic heroine at odds with family and culture. Just as Antigone

Figure 38.1 The amphitheatre at Lyons, scene of the mass martyrdom of Christians in 177 CE. Photo J. C. N. Coulston

eloped with Acheron, so too Perpetua seeks union with Christ as wife of Christ (*matrona Christi*). At the same time, the masculine suicide of the Roman heroine was well established: Arria and Portia are level-headed and stout, and Portia's ability to withstand the blade is a gesture to ancient medical theories that viewed men as more capable of dealing with pain. Lucretia presents a more complicated example, as her depiction vacillates between the masculine and the feminine (Edwards 2007).

Arguably the most famous of the Greek noble deaths, Socrates, has been called 'the world's first recorded martyr.' His legend was shaped by a succession of disciples and imitators, and his image was transformed by his biographers into a multifaceted figure molded by hearsay, slander, and adoration. As with all martyrs, Socrates's malleability makes it difficult to divorce man from myth. In his manner of dying, Socrates exhibited many of the qualities respected in men. During his trial and the days leading up to his execution, he displayed an intellectual detachment from his fate, berating his wife and friends for their emotional and irrational conduct (*Phaed*. 60A, 117E). In the *Apology*, the focus of his attention is not on death itself but on virtue: he states, 'a man who is doing good for anything ought not to calculate the chance of living or dying; he ought only to consider whether in doing anything he is doing right or wrong' (*Apology* 28B). In the *Phaedo*, as his mind turns to death, Socrates reveals that dying well is the *habitus* of the philosopher: 'the true philosophers practice dying, and death is less fearful to them than to any other man' (*Phaed*. 67E). In his final, methodically planned moments, Socrates converses cheerfully with his tearful jailor and allows adequate time to bathe before taking the poison. Socrates's composure has struck some commentators as sterile. This assessment, however, is grounded in modern constructions of masculinity; Socrates's passive countenance casts him as the classical embodiment of masculine self-control. While his friends weep tears like women, Socrates is composed, and arguably joyful. Even this joy, however, is predicated on rationality, as it is grounded in a well-reasoned argument about death as freedom from the body.

Scholars, those of ancient Christianity in particular, tend to focus on the portraits of the death of Socrates recorded by Plato, but even before Justin claimed Socrates as a 'Christian before Christ,' his person and death had been adapted and reinterpreted by generations of Greek and Roman philosophers, biographers, poets, and moralists. The influence of the philosophical death—of which Socrates is the chief exemplar—in Christianity is felt both in the Gospel of Luke's redaction of the death of Jesus as well as in more traditional martyrs like Polycarp (Sterling 2001: 383–402). That Socrates serves in part as a blueprint for Polycarp does not mean that the *imitatio Christi* motif is somehow unimportant. Jesus and Socrates interpret one another and Polycarp in this account. The co-production of these two figures is further evident in the account of the late second-century *Martyrdom of Apollonius*, in which the protagonist—a philosophically styled martyr—compares the deaths of Jesus and Polycarp in the following way: 'Just as the Athenian informers convinced the people and then unjustly condemned Socrates; so too our Savior and teacher was condemned by a few malefactors after being bound.' The comparison here is much blunter than in *Polycarp*, but it illustrates the ways in which the figure of Socrates was explicitly invoked as a comparandum for the art of dying well.

The deaths of the 'Maccabean martyrs' have also served as a perpetual crux in scholarly accounts of the history of martyrdom. Their presentation fits in many ways the traditional scholarly definition of what makes a martyr. The classic treatment of Wilhelm Bousset and Hugo Gressmann describes the Jewish religion characterized by these texts as a religion of martyrdom (*Religion des Martyriums*). Even the skeptical Glenn Bowersock, who is loath to view martyrdom as a pre-Christian phenomenon, remarks that the accounts of the Maccabees are altogether another matter. Many scholars dub the mother with her seven sons and the elderly Eleazar, from the book of 2 Maccabees, as the first martyrs. W. H. C. Frend's classic history of martyrdom, for instance, begins with a chapter on the Maccabees before moving to the Jesus movement and early church, and Jan Willem van Henten's influential study of 2 and 4 Maccabees similarly traces martyrdom to the distinguished deaths of the Maccabees, the saviors of the Jewish people.

The portrayal of the Jews as a people ready to suffer in obedience to God and to the laws reified what it meant to be Jewish during the Hellenistic period and beyond. Defense of this ideal intersected with non-Jewish value systems and ideologies of nationhood. Writing in the first century CE, Josephus proposes in *Against Apion* that the Jewish attitude to death and suffering was comparable to that of the Spartans. The Spartans were highly regarded for their military reputation, their contempt of death, and their obedience to the laws. Josephus claims that Jews surpass the loyalty of the Spartans in being obedient to their laws even when a conquered people, whereas the Spartans exhibited fidelity only when independent (2.226–28). Josephus's contrast between Jewish and Spartan attitudes to death anticipates the argument of Eusebius in book 5 of his *Church History*, that the spiritual contests fought by Christians outstrip those of earlier generations because martyrdoms—those 'battles waged for the peace of the soul'—are qualitatively better than those fought for 'children, possessions, and country.'

The narratives situate the deaths of Eleazar, the Maccabean mother and her seven sons, and Razis during the rule of Antiochus and his suppression of many Jewish religious practices. These events form part of a history of the Jewish people between the reign of Seleucus IV (187–175 BCE) and the defeat of the Seleucid general Nicanor in 161 BCE. Within this history of political liberation the martyrs play pivotal roles. Within the individual episodes of persecution, the deaths of the martyrs are turning points in the struggle for emancipation: they restore the ruptured relationship with God and initiate periods of renewed military success and eventual triumph for the Jewish people. These triumphs are incorporated into sacred history as decisive moments that, in turn, punctuate the liturgical calendar. Moments of political resistance help create a particular sense of Jewish identity, an identity forged, tested, and proved in struggles with Greek administrators and embodied in the actions of the martyrs.

The influence of the Maccabees was self-consciously embraced by early Christian writers. In the *Letter of the Churches of Lyons and Vienne* (177 CE), Blandina is compared to 'the noble mother who had encouraged her children and sent them forth triumphant to the king, having endured all the tortures of her children, hastened to them' (Eusebius, *HE* 5.1.55) In 236, Origen too recounts the details of the torture and execution of the Maccabees as 'an example of courageous martyrdom' to his friend Ambrosius (*Exhortation to Martyrdom* 22–3; Oulton and Chadwick 1954: 408–9) He then recalls the story of the three young men in the fiery furnace (*Exhortation* 33) Similar comparisons are made in North Africa by Cyprian (*Epistle* 58.6 and *Ad Fortunatum* 11) and by Augustine, who recalls that during the Great Persecution Secudus of Tigisis, the primate of Numidia, compared his own conduct with that of Eleazar of 2 Maccabees 6 (Augustine, *Breviculus Collationis cum Donatistis* 3.13.25). Among the so-called Donatist Christians of North Africa, the biblical heroes proved especially popular (*Acta Saturnini* 16).

Without a doubt, however, the most influential model for the formation of theologies of martyrdom was the death of Jesus himself. The idea of the crucifixion as an example for others is found throughout the pages of the canonical New Testament. In Luke-Acts the death of Jesus is presented as that of a prophet martyr who follows in the footsteps of the Biblical prophets and implicitly beckons others to follow him (Frend 1965: 79–83). The idea that the conduct of Jesus at death was a model is evident not only in the death of Jesus but in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, which explicitly assimilates its protagonist to Christ (Moss 2010: 46–8).

There were many reasons, therefore, for Christians to embrace martyrdom: as a means of following Jesus, achieving honor, dying nobly, and following God. And in its inception and development, early Christian martyrdom was a broad and diverse phenomenon. Even if many Christians valued dying for Christ, their explanations for their actions varied from the sacrificial deaths of Ignatius and Polycarp to the cosmic battle between good and evil envisioned in the *Passion of Perpetua* to the philosophical statements of Justin and Apollonius that their deaths were in keeping with their idea of how to live the virtuous life. In the courtroom and the arena, the martyr's resistance to authority could take the form of quiet composure and self-control, or brash antagonism, suicidal behavior, and even violence.

While some, like Saturus (d. 203 CE), a companion of Perpetua, looked forward to heavenly rewards and eschatological revenge, others, like Apollonius, professed that even if he were not resurrected from the dead it would be worth dying, as through death he had learned to live a virtuous life. Martyrs were cast as second Christs, soldiers, manly men, examples of virtue, philosophers, and sacrificial victims. In short, this was a practice and set of ideologies marked by considerable differences of interpretation. The commonly heard martyr's cry that he or she 'is a Christian' belies the contrasting ways in which death as a Christian was understood and practiced. What is constant is that the majority of Christians valued dying in this way, and that that state of affairs was fostered by more broadly held convictions about the noble death.

Political oppression in the empire

However virtuous and in-step with cultural conventions about noble death they appear, it is clear that Christians attracted a negative reputation among their non-Christian counterparts (Wilken 2003). In his correspondence with the emperor Trajan, the governor Pliny describes Christianity as 'contagious' (*Ep. Tra.* 10.96–97). Similarly, Tacitus, the Roman historian, describes Christians as a 'race of people hated for their abominations' and Christianity as a 'deadly *superstitio*' (*Annals* 15.44.3). Origen reports that Christians were suspected of magic (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.71).

They were especially well known for their enthusiasm for death. Celsus wrote that the Christians 'deliberately rush forward to arouse the wrath of an emperor which brings upon us blows and tortures and even death' (*Contra Celsum* 8.65). Christian writers themselves confirm the reputation: Tertullian writes in his address to the proconsul Scapula (*c.* 185) that a mob approached the proconsul of Asia, Arrius Antoninus, declared themselves Christians, and demanded to be put to death. The frustrated proconsul replied, 'You wretches, if you want to die, you have cliffs to leap from and ropes to hang by' (*Ad Scapulam* 5.1).

Similar events had occurred before. Philo describes how in 40 CE the Jews were willing to accept death in order to preserve their ancestral customs (*Legatio ad Gaium* 16.117). The Romans were magnanimously tolerant of dissent when it did not threaten structures of power (Francis 1995). But here was suspicion of those practices deemed superstition, and, unlike Judaism, Christianity was seen as contagious. Whereas the Jews had been tolerated as a small and ancient religion, the Christians were seen as subversive of familial and bureaucratic organizations.

For the duration of the first century Christians were regarded as Jews and presented themselves as such, albeit as the 'new Israel' or a superior form of Judaism. As Frend observed, two of the later books of the New Testament—1 Peter and the Letter of James—are addressed to diaspora Jews. And many early Christian writers claimed that they were the legitimate heirs to Abraham and Moses. They were described by Celsus as apostates from Judaism (cited in Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2.1.4).

And yet, according to the Christian narrative, the earliest persecutors of the Christians were Jews. According to the Acts of the Apostles, Stephen was the first Christian to die for Jesus (7:54–8:1), and the followers of Jesus became targets of organized persecution at the hands of religious and political leaders in Palestine during the reign of Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:1–5). For much of the twentieth century the depiction of a fledging religious movement at war with its parent religion—Judaism—dominated scholarship. That narrative maintains that as Christianity grew and spread it encountered resistance and violent opposition at the hand of diaspora Jews. The majority of the evidence for this conflict comes from Acts and the Pauline Epistles and is predicated on the understanding that Paul viewed his movement as something distinct from Judaism. But recent analysis of the first-century Jesus movement has shown that Christians were indistinguishable from Jews for much of this period; that Paul conceived of himself and his group as Jews. First-century Jews did not have the political power or military means to organize any kind of persecution against Christians. To be sure, there was social friction that occasionally erupted into violence, but it is unlikely that Jewish authorities either in Palestine or outside it were systematically persecuting Christians.

At the same time, however, we have to consider whether intra-Jewish rivalry and concern had led some Jews or groups of Jews to target others, including the followers of Jesus. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul admits that he had a hand in the routing out of Jesus followers, telling his addressees, 'You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it' (Gal 1:13).

The historical period when Stephen died and Paul was writing cannot be considered a period in which Jews persecuted Christians, because Christians did not yet exist. At the very worst, and assuming that Luke is telling us the whole story, this was a situation of conflict and tension between various Jewish groups. Though written in the second century, the *apocryphal acts of the apostles* narrate the execution of the apostles by first-century Roman authorities. These martyrdom stories present their protagonists as innocent, but the crimes committed by them and the ahistorical manner of their representation make it difficult to ascertain the charges. The death of Antipas (Revelation 2:13) around 90 CE is also difficult to assess. He died, according to the Apocalypse, on account of the name, but it is Jews who are most clearly identified as Christian antagonists.

The social alienation of Christians leaps from the page of later first-century followers of Jesus. 1 Peter, likely written around the end of the first or the beginning of the second centuries, describes followers of Jesus as sojourners and aliens, maligned 'as criminals' (1 Peter 2:12) and encountering shame as Christians (4:16). Some have suggested that when Flavius Clemens was executed for atheism by Domitian in 95 he was charged with being a Christian, but there is no evidence to suggest that this was the case (Dio Cassius 67.14; *pace* Frend 1965: 212–3).

Clearly, between the death of Jesus and the second century, there was a subtle escalation of antipathy towards Christians. This could, in certain rare situations, erupt into violence and even bloodshed.

Arguably the most well known instance of Christian persecution in the first century is the aftermath of the Great Fire of Rome. One hot summer night in 64 CE, on the eve of the summer games, a fire began in a small shop under the Circus Maximus. The fire, called the Great Fire of Rome, burned for five days and left only four of Rome's fourteen quarters unscathed.

Writing some fifty years later (*c.* 115–20 CE), the Roman historian Tacitus describes how the people of Rome blamed Nero for the fire, and Nero, in turn, deflected responsibility onto the Christians. He explains, 'Nero fastened guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on [the Christians who] were hated for their abominations' (*Annals*, 15.44–45). As a result, Christians were arrested and interrogated for

Figure 38.2 *A Christian Dirce,* by Henrik Siemiradzki, 1897, National Museum, Warsaw. The image, possibly based on 1 Clement 6.2, portrays a Christian woman killed in a re-enactment of the myth of Dirce, who was killed by being tied to the horns of a bull. Photo Wikicommons

information about others in the city. In the end 'an immense multitude' was convicted and condemned to die in all kinds of extraordinary ways. Nero devised particularly cruel forms of death for the Christians (see Figure 38.2). He had them dressed in animal skins and thrown to wild animals to be ripped apart; they were drenched in tar and burned alive as torches to light the night sky. According to much later Christian traditions (although not the second-century *apocryphal Acts*), it was in the aftermath of the Great Fire that Peter and Paul were sentenced to die.

As deeply etched into the consciousness of later Christian historians as the Great Fire and its aftermath are, they left a curiously shallow imprint on literature at the time. As Brent Shaw has recently argued, apart from Tacitus there is very little reason to think that the Christians were ever blamed for the Great Fire (Shaw 2015: 73–100). This is in large part because Christians were not known as Christians in the early years of the 60s. To outsiders and, indeed, to themselves, they were Jews. Most remarkable, if Christians suffered so publicly so early, is the absence of explicit references to these events in extant Christian literature. The book of Revelation, composed around 90, refers only to a single martyr.

Even if Christians had been rounded up and executed in the aftermath of the Great Fire, Christianity was not an illegal religion in the first century (Barnes 1968; De Ste Croix 1964: 28–33). This much is clear from a set of correspondence that passed between Pliny the Younger, the proconsul of Bithynia-Pontus, and the Roman emperor Trajan *c.* 110. In book ten of his correspondence, Pliny writes to Trajan complaining about the Christians and enquiring about the best manner in which to proceed. He describes the religio-economic impact of Christian conversion on local religious practices prior to the measures he has taken. The temples, he records, had been deserted, and no one had been purchasing sacrificial meat. Christianity had won admirers from every quarter; its participants included 'persons of every age and every class, both genders . . . not only [in] the town but villages and countryside as well.' Pliny writes that he has examined the Christians and found them innocent of any real crime. All the same, he is exasperated by their 'stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy,' which he feels deserves punishment (*Ep. Tra.* 10.96).

As a result, he has devised a system to deal with the Christians. He asks the accused individuals three times if they are Christian, with a warning about the punishment that awaits them: if they continue to confess that they are Christian, he will have them executed or, if they are citizens, sent to Rome for trial. For those who deny being Christians he has devised what has become known as the sacrifice test, in which an accused person is instructed to offer wine and incense to an image of the emperor and to curse Christ. Pliny's letter asks Trajan for advice; he is unsure if the punishment should be the same for all and whether confessing to having been Christian in the past is sufficient for a guilty verdict. In his response, Trajan (if it is truly Trajan responding) commends Pliny for his work and insists that Christians should be neither hunted down nor accused anonymously. Trajan confirms that for an accused person to offer sacrifice is sufficient proof of innocence (*Ep. Tra.* 10.97).

Pliny's frustration with Christian obstinacy is almost palpable. Against De Ste. Croix, Sherwin-White argues that it was for their defiance (*contumacia*) that Christians were arrested and executed (1964: 23–7). Certainly, Christians attracted the derision and scorn of Roman writers and administrators, and the martyr acts present their protagonists as evasive and difficult in the courtroom. At the same time, however, as De Ste. Croix notes in his rejoinder to Sherwin-White, obstinacy (*obstinatio*) and defiance (*contumacia*) were separate charges and the latter is not mentioned in the Pliny-Trajan correspondence. Only once they were in the courtroom did Christians have the opportunity to display their obstinacy, and, therefore, it is unlikely that Christians were arrested for *being* defiant (De Ste. Croix 1964: 28–33).

By the mid second century, Christians began to be more vocal about their experience of social alienation and what they felt was unjust targeting. In the first half of the second century, Justin wrote an open letter to the emperor Marcus Aurelius defending Christians. He argued that Christians were arrested and condemned to die merely 'for their name,' not because of anything that the Christians themselves had done wrong (1 *Apol.* 4.2). Around 196 CE the Christian lawyer Tertullian complained

that Roman hatred for the Christians was so great that they would use any excuse to persecute them. He wrote, 'If the Tiber rises to the walls, if the Nile fails to rise and flood the fields, if the sky withholds its rain, if there is earthquake or famine or plague, straightway the cry arises: "the Christians to the lions!"' Persecution, said Justin, did not originate only with Romans: he claims that Bar Kochba, leader of a Jewish revolt in Palestine around 132 CE, ordered that Christians should be subjected to cruel punishments unless they denied Christ (*1 Apol.* 1.31)

Mistrust of and prejudice towards Christians originated in a series of rumors that spanned the Roman empire. Marcus Cornelius Front, tutor to Marcus Aurelius (161–80), saw Christians as depraved (Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 9.5). The idea of Christian incest and cannibalism first appears explicitly in Justin Martyr (*1 Apol.* 66). Justin's version of the rumor describes how in the aftermath of a feast someone would conveniently 'knock over' a lamp, leaving the room in darkness, and the participants able to drink human blood and have sex with one another without repercussion. Tertullian repeats the same story in the third century, adding more detail about the logistics. He supplements Justin's version by saying that Christian men had to be careful to note where their mothers and sisters were positioned before the lights were extinguished (Tertullian, *Ad Nationes* 1).

Some pre-Decian literary accounts depict the impetus for execution as originating with the people. This is the case in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* and the *Letter of the Churches of Lyon and Vienne*. In both instances the behavior of the crowd serves a concrete theological purpose: in the case of Polycarp the animosity of the crowd serves to assimilate the protagonist to Jesus, and in the Gallic letter the barbarousness of the crowd serves to amplify the contrast with the self-controlled Christians.

In North Africa, where a cluster of texts describe Christian attitudes to martyrdom, Tertullian describes them as 'ever ready for death' (Tertullian, *De Spectaculis* 1) and accompanied by the Holy Spirit to prison (*Ad Martyras* 1.3). Martyrdom began to serve an evangelical purpose: the blood of the Christians is 'seed' (*Apol.* 50.13) and the courage of the Christians inspired the philosophically minded to enquire into the religion (*Apol.* 50.3)

Roman proconsuls appear to have made sincere efforts to dissuade Christians from pursuing death: encouraging them to think of their age (*Martyrdom of Polycarp*) or of their families (*Martyrdom of Irenaeus*) and giving them opportunities to recant (*Passion of Perpetua*). Certainly, and despite any empire-wide state sponsored persecution, the threat to the lives of Christians was ever present. It was this threat and the memory of the deaths of Christians Basilides and Potamiaena in Alexandria around the turn of the third century that prompted Origen to dedicate his *Exhortation to Martyrdom* to his friend Ambrosius. It did not take many Christians to die for Christians to feel that they were under attack.

Until the mid third century, Christians did not fall foul of Roman legislation. This changed on 3 January 250 CE, when the emperor Decius ordered that the usual annual sacrifice to Jupiter and the Roman Gods on the Capitol should be rehearsed throughout the empire.[1] It required that the sacrifice be performed in the presence of a Roman magistrate; in return, each faithful subject would be provided with a *libellus* as proof of his or her participation. Forty-four copies of these have survived from antiquity. One example from Egypt reads:

> To those in charge of the sacrifices of the village Theadelphia, from Aurelia Bellias, daughter of Peteres, and her daughter, Kapinis. We have always been constant in sacrificing to the gods, and now too, in your presence, in accordance with the regulations, I have poured libations and sacrificed and tasted the offerings, and I ask you to certify this for us below. May you continue to prosper.
> (2nd hand) We, Aurelius Serenus and Aurelius Hermas, saw you sacrificing.
> (3rd hand) I, Hermas, certify.
> (1st hand) The 1st year of the Emperor Caesar Gaius Messius Quintus Traianus Decius Pius Felix Augustus, Pauni 27.[2]

The sacrifice test was in many ways a test of loyalty. The statement that a person had always been sacrificing to the gods emphasized continuity of religious and social conformity and unity over time. Even though Decius had gained power only shortly before, the language of the certificate appeals to the idea that Decius stood in a tradition of emperors.

The motivations for the legislation were largely political and certainly not intended to target Christians in particular. Nowhere in the *libelli* are the signatories required to confirm that they are not Christians or repudiate Christianity (Rives 1999: 135–54). At the time when Decius came to power in 249 CE, the Roman empire was under threat. The northern borders of the Roman empire were being constantly raided by the increasingly aggressive Goths, and there were a series of comparatively minor yet nonetheless bothersome rebellions for Decius to contend with. Thus, when Decius entered Rome as military victor and emperor, he still had political rivals to deal with, a divided empire to unite.

For some Christians, the prospect of choosing between hell or death proved too daunting. Whether out of fear of torture or fear of apostasy and damnation, they elected either to try and obtain a certificate by bribery or to follow a fourth path, exile.[3] While some, like Cyprian, went into exile, other ecclesiastical leaders were less fortunate. Fabian, bishop of Rome, was executed in January (Cyprian *Ep.* 55.9).

In North Africa, where the effects of the Decian decree were particularly severe, many Christians apostasized or went into exile. In many ways, Cyprian of Carthage managed to redeem himself only when he was finally martyred during the reign of Valerian in 258 CE. After the Decian persecution was over, these apostate Christians attempted to gain re-entry to the Christian churches in Carthage. In some cases exiled clergy assumed that they would be able to return to the leadership positions that they had occupied before the Decian persecution. Responses to the Decian persecution in Carthage sowed the seeds of the Donatist schism, treated elsewhere in this volume.

For approximately six years after the end of Decius's reign, in a period of peace and calm, the Church continued to grow. Meanwhile, in the east, the new emperor Valerian was struggling to regain Antioch from the Persians. The Persians had captured and sacked the city shortly before Valerian's ascent to power in late 253 CE, and Valerian travelled east in 254 to combat the eastern threat, staying there until his capture in 260. During this time Valerian composed two letters to the Senate about Christians. The first was issued in 257 and demanded that the Church leaders participate in pagan rituals and that Christians stop meeting en masse in cemeteries. After the first edict failed to make any sizeable impact, he issued a second, stronger statement about Christians in 258, in which he directed that bishops, priests, and deacons were to be put to death at once.[4] Additionally, Christian senators and high-ranking officials were to lose their status and property and, if they did not apostasize, be executed as well. Christian women of senatorial rank were to lose their properties, as were members of the imperial household who, additionally, were to be bundled off to the imperial estates where their views would make them less of a liability. Only a handful of Christians seem to have died as a result of Valerian's second letter in 258 CE; among them was Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage.

In 260, after several years defending the eastern parts of the empire from the Goths and the Persians, Valerian met with King Shapur I of Persia to arrange a truce. Shapur betrayed Valerian and seized him as a prisoner. After Valerian's death his son Gallienus revoked his legislation, and Christians enjoyed over forty years of undisrupted peace. They may have been disliked, but they were again able to climb the social ladder, accumulate wealth, build churches, and assemble in full view of everyone. In Rome the catacombs were expanded so that by 300 CE the Catacombs of Peter and Marcellinus contained about 11,000 burials in expansive galleries (Guyon 1987: 96–102). By 360 there would be at least forty churches in Rome (Optatus of Milevie, *De Schismate Donatistarum* 2.4.5).

In February 303 CE, after twenty years as one of Rome's most successful emperors, Diocletian, emperor of the eastern empire under the tetrarchy, produced the first legislation in decades targeting Christians. Like Decius, Diocletian's edicts were concerned with furthering a sense of imperial unity. Diocletian also had genuine religious concerns and a particular interest in sacrifice. Coins minted during his reign often depicted him sacrificing. Towards the end of the third century he had taken action against the Manicheans, a religion that he saw as deriving from Rome's enemies, the Persians.

Diocletian's regulations, known as the 'Great Persecution,' took the form of several increasingly severe pieces of legislation. These edicts gradually rescinded the legal rights of Christians in the Roman empire. The publication of the first edict in February 303 made the holding of Christian meetings illegal and ordered the destruction of Christian places of worship and the confiscation of Christian scriptures. Christians were denied the right either to petition the courts or to respond to legal actions brought against them, making them especially vulnerable in judicial contexts. Christians with distinguished social status lost their rank and imperial freedmen were enslaved. Everyone, including Christians, was now expected to sacrifice before engaging in any legal or official business.

The ferocity and extent of the persecution was very different in the Latin west than in the Greek east. In the west only a portion of the legislation was enforced, and even then somewhat sporadically. While in northern Africa executions began in Cirta, modern day Algeria, in May 303, the persecutions in Britain and Gaul, the area of the empire controlled by Constantius, were relatively mild. Lactantius tells us that things progressed no further than the destruction of Church buildings, while Eusebius protests that no buildings were destroyed there at all.[5] Persecution appears to have died out in the west during the year 304 CE and was officially ended by the emperor Constantius in July 306. Constantius went further, though: he not only granted Christians in Britain, Gaul, and Spain freedom, but he even restored their confiscated property to them.[6]

In the east, the region controlled by Galierus and Diocletian, the persecutions continued and progressed. In the fifteen days immediately after the publication of the first edict, the imperial palace in Nicomedia caught on fire twice. Whatever the actual cause of the fire—Lactantius tells us Galierius was trying to frame the Christians, while the future emperor Constantine credits a bolt of lightning from heaven—suspicion fell on the Christians. A second edict was published in the summer of 303, ordering the arrest of Christian clergy.[7] According to Eusebius, the impetus for the second edict was a series of political uprisings in Melitene and Syria in which Christians were believed to have been implicated.[8] Eusebius writes that so many priests were arrested that it put a strain on the entire prison system. Apparently, common criminals had to be released in order to deal with the over-crowding.

In November 303 CE, in preparation for the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of his reign the following year, Diocletian issued a third edict.[9] This edict provided amnesty for the imprisoned clergy, providing that they sacrificed. Christian writers are curiously silent on the subject of the fourth edict: it is never referred to by Christians in the west, by Lactantius in his *On the Deaths of the Persecutors*, or by Eusebius in his *Church History*. Eusebius only ever mentions this edict in his *Martyrs of Palestine*. It seems likely that, in its original form, the Great Persecution lasted until Diocletian's retirement in 305 CE and was briefly renewed by Maximinus Daia in 311–313.

With the rise of Constantine, the fortunes of mainstream Christians would change. The passing of the Edict of Milan in 313 ended persecution in the Roman empire, at least officially. At the borders of the empire it continued in Persia through the fourth and fifth centuries, where Christians were seen as pro-Roman and treacherous. Within the Church, and in North Africa in particular, Christians engaged in intra-ecclesial violence. The Donatists, who had rejected the Church and state's embrace of Caecilianist Christianity there, continued to protest their rightful status as the Church of the martyrs. The fourth and fifth centuries brought about an explosion in the composition of stories about the deaths of martyrs. Ironically, in the wake of a new era of peace and power for Christendom the art of narrating the stories of the martyrs began to truly take shape, and Christians began to use their experience of martyrdom as a political tool in the exclusion and oppression of others.

Notes

1 Because it does not survive there is some debate about the precise date of the decree. The date is inferred from a variety of potential occasions upon which Decius *might* have demanded a universal sacrifice from the people. January 3, 250 was the date when Roman officials would have offered their annual sacrifices and oaths for the health and safety of the emperor (*pro salute imperatoris*).

2 Transcriptions and translations of the *libelli* are found in Knipfling 1923.

3 Cyprian refers to *libelli* obtained by bribery in his *On the Lapsed* 27 and *Letters* 55.13.2.
4 Cyprian, *Letter* 80.2.
5 Lactantius *On the Deaths of the Persecutors*, 15.7. Eusebius, *Church History*, 8.13.13. Eusebius does, however, list Gaul as an area afflicted by persecutions in his *Martyrs of Palestine* 13.12.This has to be judged next to the claim of a group of bishops that Gaul was 'immune' to persecution (Optatus, 1.22).
6 Lactantius, 24.7.
7 Eusebius, *Church History*, 8.2.5.
8 Eusebius, *Church History*, 8.6.8–9 and *Martyrs of Palestine*, Praef. 2.
9 Eusebius, *Church History*, 8.2.5 and 6.10.

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39

GRAECO-ROMAN PHILOSOPHICAL OPPOSITION

Michael Bland Simmons

The hostile environment

Christianity was born and developed in a hostile environment. Though pregnant with a great deal of theological and spiritual meaning for many throughout the ages, the cross nonetheless symbolized the insoluble conflict between Christianity and paganism already present in the life and teaching of Jesus (Simmons 2015). Hostilities described in the *Acts of the Apostles* between Jews and Christians preceded the greater conflict between the early church and gentiles in the Greco-Roman world during the first-century missionary expansions (Frend 1984: 11–109; Chadwick 1992). The delineation of correct (orthodox) doctrines in the face of heretical teachings and the definition of a canon of scripture were two of the major challenges of the church beginning in the second century (Chadwick 1993: 32–83). As these issues of identity were being clarified, both the pagan intelligentsia and the political administration of the Roman empire were able, beginning with Nero (54–68), to distinguish between Judaism and Christianity as separate religious traditions (Suetonius, *Caesar* 16.25; Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44). Owing to such factors as the church's continued growth in the provinces, the belief in the deity of Christ and the exclusiveness of the Christians (which was unacceptable to the polytheists of the empire), an increasingly inimical attitude towards Christianity became inevitable (Daniélou 1973; Chadwick 1993: 66–131). Christian leaders were now thrown on the defensive and began to write *apologies* which had the twofold objective of offering reasonable explanations of doctrines and practices, and evangelistically attempting to convince the pagans that Christianity was the only true religion (see Chapter 28 of this volume and Frend 1984: 229–70). Thus by the second century there emerged such erudite apologists as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Athenagoras, Theophilus and the Alexandrian theologians Clement and Origen. As we shall see, the latter wrote a refutation of the first work published against the Christians, *The True Discourse* by Celsus (henceforth *Discourse*).

Though official state persecutions of Christians had occurred as early as Nero (54–68) and Domitian (81–96), by the 250s under the emperors Decius (249–51) and Valerian (253–60), the first universal persecutions took place clearly indicating the perceived threat now posed by the church to the imperial *pax deorum* (Frend 1981)[1] which formed the conceptual basis of the empire's religious propaganda, and because it possessed theological and political implications, it was often used as a test of loyalty to the Roman government. Often associated with the imperial cult, it had been continuously developed and variously interpreted by Roman leaders since the time of Livy. Its central thesis posited that the right order and success of the empire would be maintained as long as the worship of the Roman deities was perpetuated. From Tertullian to Eusebius, the misfortunes which befell

the empire, whether natural, economic, or military, were regularly blamed on the Christians for their refusal to worship the very deities held responsible for Rome's greatness (Tertullian, *Apol.* 40; *Ad Scap.* 3; Arnobius, *Adv. nat.* 1.1; Eusebius, *HE* 9.7.3–14). The church took maximum advantage of the cessation of persecutions between Gallienus (260) and Diocletian (284), but storm clouds soon gathered. Already by the 290s, beginning with the executions of Christians in the Roman army (Simmons 1995: 38–40), a very destructive two-edged sword was being prepared by the pagans for their upcoming unprecedented attack upon the church. This double threat came in the form of (a) the most damaging obloquies ever written (to date) against the Christians, and (b) the most formidable persecution ever launched against the church in its 300-year history (Barnes 1973; Davies 1989; Woods 1992; Simmons 1995: 22–46). Moreover, the Great Persecution which began in February 303 would not end until Constantine's victory in 311 at the Milvian Bridge in Rome and the subsequent 'Edict of Milan'.

The case of philosophical opposition

Yet we must keep in mind that within this hostile environment another kind of opposition developed. It was led by learned philosophers and communicated both in the formal debates and lectures of their schools in places like Rome, Athens and Alexandria and in their works which vituperated Christian beliefs and practices. Appearing for the first time in the late second century and continuing throughout the fourth, these writings served a twofold purpose. First, they contained well-reasoned arguments against such Christian doctrines as monotheism, the incarnation, Christ's deity and passion, and the resurrection of the flesh. Second, they attempted to prove the superiority of traditional polytheism and the Hellenic *paideia* upon which Graeco-Roman culture was founded.

During the period from 150–363 CE, the three philosophers whose anti-Christian works are examined in this chapter (Celsus, Sossianus Hierocles and Porphyry), and a fourth, Julian the Apostate, an emperor with philosophical interests whom I profile in Chapter 60 of this volume, contributed to this philosophical opposition to Jesus and his followers. In this chapter I shall outline the individual and collective contributions of the first three authors, consider the major themes of one of their works (*Discourse* of Celsus) and assess their significance for the conflict between Christianity and paganism in the Roman empire.

Celsus

It has been estimated that during the period in which Celsus wrote *Discourse* against Christianity (*c.* 178 CE), there were *c.* 100,000 Christians dispersed among 200 or more communities in the empire (Hopkins 1998). A concern about the growth of the church may have been a corollary factor that motivated Celsus to write his book (Frend 1984: 310f., 443), but the immediate cause appears to have been the need to write an erudite rejoinder to the apologies of Justin Martyr written *c.* 150.[2] We know nothing of Celsus beyond the pages of the *Discourse*, of which *c.* 70 per cent has been accurately preserved in Origen's *Contra Celsum* (Rougier 1977: 19; Hoffmann 1987: 45; Origen, *C.Cels.* 5.53). Its significance as the oldest literary attack upon Christianity by a member of the pagan intelligentsia of which details have survived reveals invaluable insight into the conflict that was occurring between Christianity and paganism during our period. The central thesis of my argument in this chapter will stress the truculent nature of the conflict between the two religious traditions.

Although Origen informs us that Celsus was a professed adversary of Christianity (*C.Cels.* 4.47; 8.62) and his erudition in pagan and Christian literature was noteworthy (*C.Cels.* 4.11; 2.76; 4.36), the school of philosophy which he espoused has been the focus of scholarly debate. Origen calls him an Epicurean (1.8) but elsewhere he expresses doubt (4.54; 4.75). It has been suggested that Celsus was the Epicurean who lived in the second century to whom Lucian of Samosata dedicated his *Alexander the False Prophet*,[3] but passages in the *C.Cels.* which betray either Stoic (4.67) or

Platonic (1.32; Baumeister 1978) doctrines eliminate him as the anti-Christian author of the *Discourse*. It would therefore be prudent to conclude that Celsus was an unknown eclectic philosopher with strong Platonic leanings whose major focus was practical ethics rather than abstract metaphysical concepts (Chadwick 1947: 46f.).

Turning to the date of *Discourse*, Celsus (8.69) refers to contemporary Christians who were sought out and executed. This appears to be an allusion to the rescript of Marcus Aurelius which launched the persecution at Lyons and Vienne in 177 CE (Chadwick 1953: xiv). Also, in the preface to *C.Cels.*, Origen remarks that Celsus had been dead a long time, and this makes sense in light of Eusebius' statement (*HE* 6.36.2) that Origen wrote his refutation during Philip the Arab's reign (244–9 CE; Chadwick 1953: xxv–xxvi; Borret 1967: 15–21). Finally, a reference to joint emperors in the *Discourse* (8.71) again strongly suggests the period of Marcus Aurelius. It appears therefore likely that Celsus wrote his *True Discourse against the Christians c.* 178 CE.

More difficult to answer is the question of Celsus' provenance. Suggestions have ranged from Rome to Alexandria as the place of origin for the *Discourse* (Chadwick 1953: xxviii–xxix), and it is quite possible that Celsus may have acquired knowledge of Christian heretical teaching by attending lectures given by, e.g. Marcion and Valentinus in Rome (Amphoux 1992: 250). A recent study argues that he was from Pergamum.[4] However, *C.Cels.* 7.3–11 undoubtedly reveals personal knowledge of contemporary Near Eastern prophetic practices, and this would appear to provide unambiguous evidence that Celsus most probably came from Syria (Burke 1984: 3; Frend 1984: 177).

With respect to the structure, method and style of the *Discourse*, we first note that Books 1–3 of the *C.Cels.* respond to the attacks of a Jew – presumably a literary device used to express Celsus' views – found in the early part of the work;[5] Books 4–5 give Celsus' criticism of the Jewish religion from which Christianity originated; Books 6–7 contain Celsus' argument that Christians borrowed from Greek culture and their religion encouraged sedition in the empire:

> For Celsus has quoted several passages especially from Plato, comparing them with extracts from the holy scriptures such as could impress an intelligent person, saying that those ideas have been better expressed among the Greeks, who refrained from making exalted claims and from asserting that they had been announced by a god or the son of a god.
>
> *(*C.Cels. *6.1)*

Some of the basic components of classical anti-Christian polemics make their appearance here: the superiority of Graeco-Roman culture (including that Christian scriptures were written in inelegant style; see Figure 39.1), a criticism of scripture and a dependence upon Plato to prove the weakness of Christian doctrine.

In Book 7 Origen responds to Celsus' concept of demonology, divine providence and his poignant accusation that Christianity has caused sedition against the Roman government. Noteworthy here is Celsus' silence on such topics as cannibalism, incest, infanticide and orgies which were popular criticisms of Christianity during the second century (Fox 1987: 427). As a learned philosopher he evidently felt himself to be above the clamour of the ignorant masses, His overall method of argumentation seems to have been inspired by anti-Jewish writers like Lysimachus, Chaeremon and Apion (Feldman 1990: 106). Moreover, if we keep in mind the important fact that it was an enemy of Celsus (Origen) who edited the *Discourse*, it is obvious that we cannot always get a clear picture of the details of his argument (Hoffmann 1987: 44). Suffice it to say that the method and style of the *Discourse* can be generally characterized by (1) the use of historical and 'scientific' facts; (2) the use of irony (often humorous); (3) deliberate distortion of his enemies' beliefs; (4) literary retortion; (5) the allegorization of, e.g. Homer, but at the same time refusing to allow the Christians to allegorize the Bible; (6) the use of Stoic and Platonic doctrines to support his argument; and (7) criticism of scripture to show the superiority of pagan culture.[6] These salient features of Celsus' argument contributed to his major goal of converting the Christians 'by shaming them out of their religion' (Quasten 1953: 52).

Figure 39.1 A leaf from Bodmer Papyri 66; probably late second century CE, showing parts of John's Gospel; photo Wikicommons

Though he emphasized the superiority of Greek culture, Celsus nevertheless employed his knowledge of the Bible in his attack upon Christianity. It is true that Origen says he was not acquainted with the words of scripture (6.12), but this probably means that he was ignorant of the different levels of biblical interpretation (literal, moral, spiritual) used in the Alexandrian exegetical schools. Many passages in the *Discourse* quoted in the *C.Cels.* confirm Celsus' knowledge of scripture. The question is: how much of the Bible did he know? In beginning to answer this, we must remember that by 180 CE the New Testament canon had not been closed (Rougier 1977: 115–18), and we often find Celsus citing non-canonical books like the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Book of Enoch* (1.63; 5.54) along with canonical books. Origen is explicit that he knew Matthew (1.34) and the other gospels (6.16) very well, and many passages in the *C.Cels.* attest to this (e.g. 1.34–8). Origen also admits that Celsus had read *Genesis* (4.42), and one study has demonstrated that the text he used was the Septuagint, based on the verbal agreements between it and passages of Celsus quoted in *C.Cels.* (Burke 1986: 242). Of the rest of the Pentateuch, the books of the Prophets, the historical and wisdom literature, the Pauline corpus, *Acts* and *Revelation*, Celsus knew either little or nothing (Benko 1984: 148f.; Wilken 1984: 101; *contra* Rougier 1977: 113f.).

In order to give examples of Celsus' criticism of scripture, we begin by noting his great aversion for the allegorical method of interpretation. He denounces the Christian allegorization of the Mosaic histories (1.17) because the language of Moses, particularly the Genesis account of creation, will allow no such meaning for the text (1.20). In any event, he argues, Christians give an allegorical meaning to the creation story of Genesis 2:21f. because they are ashamed of it (4.38). Finally, this hermeneutical method produces an interpretation of passages more absurd than the fables themselves (4.51; 4.87). Often Celsus attacks the Bible by attempting to show the superiority of a philosophical doctrine, as he does in 1.19–20, where he rejects the Christian doctrine of creation by saying that the world is uncreated, basing his argument on the Platonic concept of the eternity of the world (Tim. 22f.) combined with the Stoic doctrine of cyclical conflagrations. Another contention is that the stories of the Bible are simply invented by its writers. Thus the 'twelve legions of angels'

(Matt. 26:52–4) is a fiction of the evangelists (2.10). Jesus' genealogy was made up by Matthew to make it appear that he descended from royalty (2.32). Moses and the prophets have written pure nonsense (6.50). Celsus also accentuates the inconsistencies of the Bible. For example, Jesus' injunction to turn the other cheek is an infraction of the O.T. *lex talionis* (6.50). One Gospel says that one angel came to the tomb, another says two (5.52). Jesus forbade his disciples to be ambitious (Mark 10:44; Matt. 20:25; Luke 22:25), which contradicts his prophecy that they would rule over the nations (7.23). Celsus also attacks the style of scripture: its language lacks the elegance of Greek literature (6.2), it is very simple and commonplace (4.87), and even vulgar (3.68). Finally, even though the writers of the Bible borrowed from the wise men of antiquity, they often misunderstood and misconstrued what they wrote (1.21; 6.7). This critique may have been provoked by Justin Martyr who wrote that God's divine Logos had been revealed to the wise men of old like Socrates. They were in a true sense 'Christians before Christ'. Origen, moreover, following one of the basic arguments of Christian apologetics (e.g. 6.43), is determined to prove that Moses' writings are much older than Homer. The borrowing went in the opposite direction.

Although Celsus overwhelmingly reviled orthodox Christianity, his knowledge extended also to heretical groups or movements of the second century (Burke 1984: 5f.). In the *Discourse* reference is made to Gnostic sects, apocryphal works (e.g. *Preaching of Peter*), Marcionite doctrines (6.74; Jackson 1992), and sects founded by the women apostles, Helen of Samaria, the consort of Simon Magus, Marcellina, Salome, Mariamne and Martha. Even heresies that were unknown to the learned Origen are mentioned (8.16). It appears from this that Celsus had a broad knowledge of the religion that he was assailing, and his purpose for alluding to the diverse doctrines that were disseminated in the name of Christianity is clear. It appears from this that Celsus had a broad knowledge of the religion that he was assailing, and his purpose for alluding to the diverse doctrines that were disseminated in the name of Christianity is clear. By opposing heretical teachings to those of the orthodox, he was able to prove the disunity, and therefore falsity, to his readers of Jesus and his followers (Martinez 1990–1: 203).

In respect of Celsus' legacy, in the history of ancient thought, particularly as it relates to the conflict between Christianity and paganism in the Roman empire, *Discourse* and the *Contra Celsum* reveal the respective positions of the educated representatives of the old polytheism and the new monotheism. Celsus is important for our understanding of this conflict because he is the first learned pagan to write against Christianity, and the *Discourse* is significant for setting a precedent for later anti-Christian polemicists regarding scripture, the superiority of Graeco-Roman culture and the use of pagan philosophy, especially Platonism, to disprove the credibility of Christian doctrine. Even though some scholars question the influence of Celsus upon later periods (Quasten 1953: 52; Hauck 1985–6), others have equally argued that a number of Christian writers before Origen wrote in response to *Discourse* (Chadwick 1953: xiii; Baumeister 1978: 175; Benko 1984: 140; Burke 1984: 1–7). While it may be true that a direct influence cannot be established in many cases, it would certainly be rash to suggest later writers like Hierocles, Porphyry of Tyre and the emperor Julian, had not become familiar with many of the anti-Christian themes of the *Discourse*.

Sossianus Hierocles

Sossianus Hierocles was successively governor of the province in which Palmyra was located (*c.* 297), *vicarious* probably of the diocese of Oriens, *praeses* of Bithynia (303) and Prefect of Egypt (310–11).[7] By 23 February 303 when Diocletian promulgated the first edict against the Christians, Hierocles had already exerted considerable influence upon imperial officials in Nicomedia to launch the 'Great Persecution'. Lactantius informs us that he was the author and instigator of the persecution (DMP 16). Christians who crossed themselves at Antioch during sacrifices ordered by Diocletian before the persecution interfered with the *haruspices*' ascertaining the proper omens (DMP 10.1–5; Eusebius, *HE* 8.4.3f.), and this precipitated the imperial *concilium* (late 302/early 303) at Nicomedia

where Diocletian, Galerius and representatives from the government and the military met to decide what to do with the Christians. Hierocles was there persuading Diocletian to begin the persecution (DMP 11). After Diocletian consulted the oracle of Apollo at Didyma, he was convinced that it was the will of the gods to initiate the persecution (Eusebius, *VC* 2.50; Lactantius, DMP 2.7; Arnobius, *Adv. nat.* 1.26; Zosimus, *Hist. nov.* 2.12 and 2.36f.).

It may have been just before the outbreak of the persecution that Hierocles wrote the *Philalethes* (*Lover of Truth*), although this is debatable, some scholars dating the work to *c.* 311–13 (Barnes 1976: 240–3, 1981: 22; Forrat and Des Places 1986: 18, 23; Des Places 1989). However, an attempt to explain the contradictory descriptions of the *Philalethes* found in Lactantius and Eusebius, who were contemporaries of Hierocles and were familiar with his work, may help to solve the problem. Lactantius is explicit that Hierocles wrote it not *against*, but *to* the Christians (*Div. inst.* 5.2). Eusebius makes reference to the work written 'against us'.[8] Hierocles may have published two editions, one which possessed a more conciliatory tone (*c.* 303) to which Lactantius refers; and a later edition with an overt hostile message, perhaps when Hierocles was Prefect of Egypt (310–1). Eusebius' remark 'against us' may therefore refer to this later edition. Whether there were indeed two editions, it is clear that from *c.* 303 the *Philalethes* was circulating in the eastern provinces. Hierocles drew his materials from *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* written by Philostratus (*c.* 217) at the request of Septimius Severus' wife, Julia Domna.[9] Apollonius appears to have been an ascetic who lived during the first century, but by Philostratus' time a rich hagiographic tradition had developed, and it is for this reason that the latter makes him not only a Greek hero but a wonder-working holy man possessed with divine qualities (Forrat and Des Places 1986: 53f.). Hierocles' *Philalethes* undoubtedly depended on earlier anti-Christian sources, and Celsus is a good possibility. Eusebius himself admits that Origen in the *C.Cels.* had so sufficiently answered Hierocles' criticisms that he only needed to focus on his comparison of Jesus and Apollonius (*C.Hier.* 1; Junod 1988: 41). Even though it was written hastily in the midst of controversy and is therefore lacking in style and orderly argumentation, the *C.Hier.* is a book-by-book criticism of the work of Philostratus[10] as it was used by Hierocles (*C.Hier.* 1). It would appear that the *Philalethes* was not published for the public, which may explain why it had apparently little influence upon later writers.

Though Hierocles was not a philosopher, it would be rash to discount the significance of the *Philalethes* for the philosophical opposition to Christianity during the early fourth century. First, this work reveals significant information about the intellectual background to the pagan-Christian conflict during the period immediately before the outbreak of the Great Persecution. Second, it reveals the close association between pagan intellectuals and the anti-Christian policies of the Tetrarchy (Simmons 1995: 24–46, 2015). Third, it is significant for the historical development of pagan and Christian apologetics and polemics as literary genres in the late Roman empire. Fourth, it gives us some understanding about developments in the history of comparative religions. Next, it helps us to understand the evolving concept of the 'Holy Man' in ancient Mediterranean society. Finally, it demonstrates the importance that both sides of the conflict placed upon such religious concerns as miracles, healings and prophecy (Gallagher 1982: 165f.). Note that after mentioning Apollonius, Hierocles informs us of his purpose for writing:

> What then is my reason for mentioning these facts? It was in order that you may be able to contrast our own accurate and well-established judgment on each point, with the easy credulity of the Christians. For whereas we reckon him who wrought such feats not a god, but only a man pleasing to the gods, they on the strength of a few miracles proclaim their Jesus a god.
>
> *(C.Hier. 2)*

In these lines we have the heart of Hierocles' message: (1) Jesus is not God, and (2) the basis of Christian faith cannot be proven. By constructing an argument that employs the same method of

literary retortion which Pophyry used in his *Contra Christianos*, it is noteworthy that Eusebius says very little about Jesus and Christianity in general, but prefers to attack Hierocles by using his weapons against him. Its main themes are Apollonius, Jesus and his disciples, miracles (including healings and exorcisms), fideism, prophecy, and Fate and Free Will.

Porphyry of Tyre

Originally given the Semitic name Malchos ('King') after his father,[11] Porphyry (Figure 39.2) was born in the Phoenician city of Tyre in *c.* 232 CE.[12] By *c.* 250 he came to Caesarea in Palestine where for a period he probably studied biblical exegesis and hermeneutics, particularly the Alexandrian allegorical method of interpretation, under Origen.[13] Porphyry may have been a Christian at this time, and it may have been while he was in Caesarea that he was assaulted by Christian youths (Socrates, *HE* 3.23.37), which may have initiated the development of a hatred for Christianity which eventually gained for him a reputation as a 'defensor simulacrorum' (F. Maternus, *De err. prof. relig.* 13.4). Sometime later, Porphyry went to Athens where he studied philology and philosophy under Longinus. Here the critical, linguistic, literary, rhetorical and historical skills were developed that he would later successfully use against the Christians (Eunapius, *Vit. phil.* 456). Such works as the *Epistle to Anebo* and *De antro nympharum* belong to this period (Smith 1993). In 263 he left Athens for Rome, where he became the disciple of Plotinus and studied in his Neoplatonic school there. Sometime thereafter Porphyry became suicidal, and his master advised him to go on holiday (268). He travelled to Sicily (Eusebius, *HE* 6.19; *Vit. Plot.* 4, 11) and while there took at least one trip to *Africa Proconsularis* to do zoological research for the *De abstinentia*, and may have begun a Neoplatonic school in Carthage (Simmons 1995: 29, n. 310; 2015: 16f.). Plotinus died in 270, and Porphyry returned to Rome to assume leadership in the Neoplatonic school. Late in life he married a widow named Marcella who had seven children, and around the age of sixty-eight he had a mystical experience similar to those of his master which brought about the union of his soul with the One (*Vit. Plot.* 23; Simmons 1995: 219, nn. 24f.; 2015: 134–58). He completed the edition of the *Enneads* before his death which occurred sometime around 305.

Porphyry appears to have exerted significant influence upon the events at Diocletian's court which led to the outbreak of the Great Persecution in February 303 (Simmons 2015). In his *Epistle*

Figure 39.2 Porphyry of Tyre, in a French sixteenth-century engraving; photo Wikicommons

to Marcella (4), he alludes to an important trip to the east because, he says, of 'a need of the Greeks', which took place around the time that Diocletian and Galerius were devising a programme for the persecution. Lactantius informs us that a 'priest of philosophy' who taught abstinence and wrote three books against the Christians dined regularly at Diocletian's palace in Nicomedia (*Div. inst.* 5.2). This is undoubtedly a reference to Porphyry, who in *Abst.* calls the philosopher 'a priest of the Supreme God' (2.49.1), and the three books refer to *De philosophia ex oraculis* which contained a number of anti-Christian oracles and was written most probably just before the persecution began (Simmons 2015).[14] Porphyry was probably in attendance at the same imperial conference that Hierocles and other magistrates attended in late 302. Porphyry was the ideal person to participate in the discussions about the Christians, and Diocletian will have listened to his advice about the impending persecution. He was the leading scholar of his day, concerned both about the decline of pagan culture and the increasing number of intellectuals going over to the church. He was the most famous anti-Christian activist who had already published several formidable works against Christianity. As noted, the *Phil. orac.* contained a number of oracles against the Christians, and a recent work argues that each of its three books delineates a soteriological path for each of the three parts of the soul: traditional cults and theurgy for the common masses, purification of the lower soul for the novice philosopher by means of continence, and Neoplatonic philosophy for the higher soul.[15] In *Ad Marcellam* 18 Porphyry asserted that the greatest expression of piety is to honour the gods according to ancestral customs. He also believed in the superiority of Greaco-Roman culture to the man-made ludicrous (so he claimed) fables of the Christians.[16] All of these sentiments will have suited Diocletian's policies against the Christians. Arnobius of Sicca, the first Christian author to write in response to Porphyry, provides evidence that the anti-Christian works of Porphyry were circulating in the western Roman empire by the late third century, and this may indeed indicate that Diocletian supported the dissemination of Porphyrian anti-Christian propaganda in association with the official imperial legislation of the Great Persecution (Beatrice 1988; Simmons 2015).[17]

Porphyry was a polymath whose scholarly interests led him to study history, philosophy, religion, theology, the natural and medical sciences, zoology, philology and rhetoric.[18] He wrote *c.* 80–100 works, and three of these, described recently as Porphyry's trilogy on soteriology (Simmons 2015), are particularly important for the present study: *Contra Christianos*, *De philosophia ex oraculis* and *De regressu animae*. The *Contra Christianos* was a systematic attack in 15 books upon Christian scripture, which provoked responses from, e.g. Arnobius, Methodius, Eusebius, Apollinaris, Philostorgius, Firmicus Maternus, Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Didymus the Blind, John Chrysostom, Severian, Cyril, Jerome and Augustine (Simmons 2015: 52–91). The latter admired Porphyry for his scholarly qualities, and he was highly respected in Roman North Africa during his episcopal career (Aug., *Civ. Dei* 7.25; 8.12; 10.10, 28, 29, 31). The *Contra Christianos* posed such a threat to the church that Constantine's edict of 333 refers to the Arians as 'Porphyrians' (Socrates, *HE* 1.9.30; *Codex Theodosianus* 15.5.66), and an edict issued in February 448 by Theodosius II and Valentinian III ordered all copies of it to be burned (*Cod. Just.* 1.1.3).[19] Fragments survive only in Christian writings. The *Phil. orac.* as noted above was a collection of oracles which offered a tripartite soteriology on the basis of Chaldaean-Neoplatonic teachings,[20] and the *De regressu animae* was a philosophical work about the ascent of the soul to God.

The themes of *Discourse* of Celsus

Jesus

The brunt of Celsus' attack focused upon the person and works of Jesus Christ principally to disprove his deity. Philosophically, the incarnation is impossible because this compromises the (Platonic) doctrine of divine immutability (Chadwick 1966: 101; Wallis 1972: 101). Rejecting the virgin birth as a fable invented by Jesus himself (*C.Cels.* 1.28), the Jew of Book I explains his birth as the result of

Mary's affair with a Roman soldier named Panthera (1.39). Furthermore, if Jesus was really God, why was he forced to escape to Egypt (1.66)? True divinity does not possess physical characteristics: God cannot have been enclosed in Jesus' body, eaten food or spoken with a voice (1.69f.). Besides, why did God have to descend in the first place? To learn what goes on in the world? Does he not know all things (4.3)? The incarnation is not only illogical, it is also unnecessary: God did not have to breathe his spirit into a womb full of pollution, because he could have simply created a body for Jesus. More people would have believed in him because of his immediate existence from above (6.73). Underlying Celsus' attack upon the incarnation is Platonic soteriology which affirmed the affinity of the soul with God, disparaged corporeal and material existence, and placed first priority on purifying one's inner being with philosophy. Life in a physical body was depreciated and shameful. Even so, Christian doctrine was rejected for its particularity: why did God send His son to an obscure corner of earth to live as a Jew (6.78)? Finally, by relocating God, the incarnation would disrupt the natural order of things foreordained by providence (4.5).

To disprove the deity of Christ required an explanation of his miracles which were recorded in scripture. Celsus does not deny the fact of Jesus' miracles, but rather concentrates on the means by which they were performed. Perhaps influenced by rabbinical sources, Celsus attributes Jesus' miracles to his great skills as a magician (8.9).[21] By associating magic with ignorance and immorality (Gallagher 1982: 43–6), Celsus could prove to the educated classes of the empire that Jesus, who had learned sorcery in Egypt, and his followers, were deceived persons from the lowest classes of society (2.52f; Kee 1986: 121ff.). Magic cannot deceive true philosophers, who are educated and moral (6.41). But Jesus' magic was not just a result of innocence. His intentions were quite malicious and hypocritical because, although he performed miracles by sorcery, he excluded others from his kingdom who did (1.6). The miracles have nothing to do with God, therefore, neither do they benefit mankind (1.6; 1.46; 2.48; 2.51). Origen's response is that magicians do not call their audience to a reformation of character (1.38).

As the first writer of antiquity who criticized the central figure of Christianity, Celsus moved beyond the incarnation and miracles to discredit the belief in Christ's deity. Origen informs us that many times in the *Discourse* Celsus assailed the life of Jesus as being the most infamous (7.56), and his main goal was to prove that Jesus was a mere man (3.41). He asks, how could Jesus really be God when he tried to escape from the Jews disgracefully, he was betrayed by his own disciples, and he could not even save himself on the cross (2.9)? Why did Jesus, though challenged, not manifest any visible sign in the temple that he was God's son? Relying upon the belief in the superiority of Graeco-Roman religious *mos maiorum* which affirmed 'older is better', Celsus criticized the recent appearance of this 'God' in history (1.26). The moral turpitude of Jesus' character was a salient feature of Celsus' obloquy: Christ obtained his living, he says, in a shameful and importunate manner (1.62). God hated him for his sorcery (1.71); he deluded a few Jews of worthless character into following him (2.4). The crux of Celsus' argument here was important in the intellectual debates about the nature of the God-man in antiquity who was conceived as a person with an upright moral character whose miracles bestowed good things upon humanity. Celsus argues that because Jesus deceived people by sorcery, possessed a base character and could convert only the lowest classes in society, he could not be given the title *God*, *Son of God*, or even *great man* (1.57; 2.41; 2.76). And in order to strike at the foundation of Christian beliefs about Jesus (scripture), Celsus says that either the gospels were corrupted from their original meaning and rewritten to answer refutations (2.26f.), or that Jesus himself borrowed from, and perverted, Greek philosophy (6.16; 7.58). Celsus does not, however, leave his criticism at the historical level. Inquiring about the relevance of Christianity to contemporary society, he asks, why does Jesus not prove his deity now? Why is he not recognized by those (the Jews) who have been looking for a Messiah? Why do many people not believe in Jesus if indeed he came to earth as God (2.78; 7.35)?

Divine impassibility was a basic theological tenet of the kind of Middle Platonism espoused by Celsus (Gallagher 1982: 150), and thus the doctrine of the crucifixion which posited that Christ's

death was efficacious for the salvation of all humanity was attacked vehemently by Celsus. We may give five major criticisms. First, since Jesus died the ignominious death of a criminal on a cross, he certainly was not God (2.5). Many robbers have died on crosses, he says, so why should we not call them 'God' (2.44). By stripping Christ's death of its theological interpretation, Celsus concluded that Jesus was sentenced by the Jews as one deserving of death (2.10). Second, the disciples betrayed Jesus at his death (2.11f.). Next, Jesus neither received help from God, nor was he able to save himself from the cross (1.54). To prove his deity, Jesus should have disappeared from the cross (2.68). Fourth, a true God feels no pain, and in any event, what father would allow his son's torture (8.41)? Opposing Gnostic with orthodox views of Christ's passion, Celsus will venture to say that Jesus only appeared to suffer on the cross (2.25). Finally, Celsus finds it strange, even if the crucifixion is accepted, that those who were responsible for Jesus' execution received no punishment from God (8.39). The notion of the 'suffering God' contradicted the Platonic doctrine of divine impassibility. Moreover, by basing the premises of his argument on the view that the Passion narratives in the gospels were inventions (2.10; 2.59), Celsus can conclude that the story of the cross concerns the death of a man who was a criminal (2.16).

Celsus had a special disdain for the resurrection of Christ. Owing to the Platonic doctrine of the dichotomy between soul and body, Celsus finds bodily resurrection philosophically impossible. It would have been impossible for God to receive back Jesus' spirit after being contaminated by contact with a body (6.72). As we have seen, Jesus only appeared to die, but he later reappeared and by the use of sorcery deceived an insane woman and others with good imaginations to believe that he had been raised from the dead (2.55f.). Anyway, if the story had been true, Jesus as God should have appeared to all men universally (2.63ff.). In reality, Celsus asserts that Jesus could not open his own tomb (2.54f.).

Another criticism of Celsus is associated with his belief that the exploits of the Greek heroes are superior to the miracles of Jesus (1.67). During this period both pagans and Christians believed in miracles (Dodds 1965: 84). Although Jesus performed miracles by magic for evil purposes (1.68), Celsus insists that many who lived before him performed wonders and foretold the future for the benefit of humanity. Asclepius, Cleomedes, the Dioscuri, Hercules and Dionysus are a few examples (3.3, 22). Besides, Aristeas of Proconnesus, Abaris the Hyperborean and the Clazomenian are much better candidates for divinity than Jesus (3.26–9, 32f.). The glorious deaths of Hercules, Orpheus, Anaxarchus and the Sibyl are superior to the ignoble demise of Jesus (7.53–5). If Asclepius heals, prophesies and does good to humanity (3.24), there is no room in Graeco-Roman religion for a deceiving magician who deluded the ignorant masses.

God

One of the greatest weaknesses of Christianity for Celsus was the concept of a God who constantly changed his mode of being. We have already seen how this relates to Celsus' argument about the crucifixion, but now it is necessary to observe how it relates to creation. Celsus relied on Marcionite teaching which distinguished between a superior God and an inferior God in several passages where he calls the Creator of the Old Testament an 'accursed divinity' (6.28, 51ff.). According to Plato in the *Timaeus*, the creation of mortal beings who descend into the World of Becoming is the work of the Demiurge. Following this academic doctrine, Celsus punctiliously disparages the stories of creation in *Genesis* (4.38f.). Christian teaching about a heavenly creator is thus a perversion of the *Timaeus* account which resulted from the biblical writers' borrowing from Plato (6.19). To the Christian views, Celsus opposes the Platonic doctrines of the eternity of the world and the Stoic concept of cyclical periods in time characterized by intermittent conflagrations (4.11, 65).

Teleology was an important aspect of the pagan-Christian debate about the nature of God and his relationship to the natural world. Celsus ridicules the Judaeo-Christian belief that God created the world for man (4.74). He asks how can anyone believe that man is superior to animals. They are

intelligent (4.78–81), they converse and possess reason (4.84) and are more beloved by God (4.97). Divine providence has allocated a proper place for humans and animals, but man cannot claim superiority over other species in the world (4.99). Neither can man even boast of a better knowledge of God. Celsus bases his argument on Roman augury and divination and asseverates that serpents and eagles have the power of sorcery (4.86), birds can predict future events and elephants are observant of oaths (4.88).

With respect to God's nature, again Celsus adopts the standard teaching of the Academy: 'Ultimate being, colourless, formless and impalpable, visible only to the mind that is guide of the soul, round which is the species of true knowledge' (6.19). This quotation from Plato demonstrates that Celsus' understanding of God is permeated with a distinct apophatic meaning, and may be one reason for his abhorrence of Christian doctrines like the incarnation, divine intervention in human affairs and the ridiculous concept of God's chosen people. Hence God is unspeakable (7.43). He has neither mouth nor voice (6.62), no form or colour, neither does he partake of motion or substance (6.64). God cannot be reached by word, or expressed by nature. He is incorporeal and impassible (6.64f.). It is impossible to say, as Genesis 2 maintains, that God created man in his image because God is dissimilar to any other species of visible things (6.63). Yet the soul needed salvation (purification). Following Platonic soteriology which emphasized the need to purify the soul and flee the passions of corporeal existence, Celsus affirms that man 'ought never to forsake God at all, neither by day nor by night, neither in public nor in private. In every word and deed . . . let the soul be continually directed towards God' (8.63). There was already by the second century a development in philosophy towards a rational monotheism which attempted to accommodate the old polytheism (Chadwick 1953: xvi–xvii). While rejecting Christian notions of monotheism, Celsus insists that it makes no difference if we call the One God Zeus, Adonai or Sabaoth (5.41–5; Baumeister 1978: 163f.; Bregman 1984; Hovland 1984: 202). This concept of the One true God who is transcendent, conceived apophatically and approachable only through rational thought, forms an essential part of Celsus' central thesis: there has been handed down a True Doctrine from ancient times which is the foundation of Graeco-Roman civilization, and it has given to mankind a true understanding of God's nature.

Prophecy

By 150 CE the Christian apologetic tradition had already developed a cogent argument based on the belief that Christianity must be true because Jesus Christ fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah (Hauck 1989: 137). Prophetic revelation, oral or written, was thought to provide a divine, secret and beneficial knowledge accessible only to a few qualified recipients (MacMullen 1984: 25). The *argument from prophecy* was central to the pagan-Christian conflict during our period (150–363), and we know of a few pagan philosophers, such as Justin Martyr (*Dial.* 8) and Theophilus of Antioch (*Ad Autol.* 1.14), who were so convinced by it that they converted to Christianity. Both Christians and pagans believed in their respective prophetic traditions, and each in turn attempted to prove the falsity of their opponents' positions.

Origen's argument, which followed second-century apologetics, maintained that the O.T. prophets were inspired by the One true God, they spoke the truth, antedated the wise men of Greece, possessed honourable characters and their prophecies were fulfilled in the life and death of Jesus Christ (7.4–42). Celsus ridicules the idea of a particular revelation, bases his argument on Stoic premises, and vehemently attacks the Christian fulfillment-from-prophecy argument (2.30; 3.1; 4.28; 7.36). His primary objective was to disprove the deity of Christ based on O.T. prophecies. There are five major points in his argument.

First, Celsus maintains that the O.T. prophecies are illogical and contradictory. This became an important theme in classical anti-Christian polemics, influencing later writers like Porphyry and Julian. Celsus says that the prophecies depict God as favouring evil (7.13). The prediction that the

Jews will fill the earth and slay their enemies is ridiculous (7.19). Concerning the contradictions of the prophets, he asks if they really foretold that the son of the same Hebrew God would come into the world, how could he command one law through Moses and a different one through Jesus? Either he forgot what he had told Moses, or changed his mind with Jesus (7.18, 20, 25).

Second, Celsus rejects the claim that Jesus fulfilled O.T. Messianic prophecies primarily because they can easily be applied to many other men more credible than Jesus (2.28), they are inconsistent with the character of God (7.15ff.), and they are more suitable to events other than those of Jesus' life (1.50). If the prophecies were so clearly fulfilled in Jesus, why have the Jews not received him as their Messiah (1.52)? Philosophically the heart of Celsus' argument here is based on Stoic epistemology, which held that reality is material and knowledge is derived from sense-perception. Inasmuch as Christian *prophetic revelation* was produced by sense-perception, it was carnal, unreliable and certainly not divine (7.33–40; Hauck 1988: 242–9, 1989: 121–9).

Celsus' third point is that Jesus himself was not a prophet. Miracles and prophecy were signs of genuine divine power in Graeco-Roman religions, and consequently Celsus attempts to discredit Jesus as a wonder-working prophet. Christ did not foreknow all that happened to him (2.13). The prophecies about Judas and Peter at the Last Supper are ludicrous (2.19): a man who banquets with a god will not plot against him (2.21)! And even if the fictions about Jesus' foreknowledge are accepted as true (2.15), one must keep in mind that Jesus deceived people by sorcery to believe that he was the one predicted by the O.T. prophets (3.1). Not only does Celsus attempt to destroy the credibility of Christian prophetic revelation, he also demonstrates the superiority of pagan oracles. Civilization, he asserts, has benefitted greatly from oracles given at Delphi, Dodonna, Clarus and other sites throughout the empire's history (7.3). As a result of obeying these oracles, many have been miraculously healed, magnificent cities have been built, colonies were established, rulers have prospered and barren women have given birth (*C.Cels.* 8.45). Furthermore, the oracular responses were given by priests and priestesses who were under divine influence. To some of these the gods appeared in visible form. Conversely, it is historical fact that those who disregarded the oracles have brought divine disfavour on themselves, causing entire cities to perish and individuals to suffer (8.45).

Celsus' fifth point is very significant for our study here and in relation to Porphyry and Julian as well. In *C.Cels.*, Celsus derides *contemporary* prophetic experiences in Syria:

> As Celsus professes to describe the style of prophecy in Phoenicia and Palestine as though he had heard it and had a thorough first-hand knowledge of it, let us also consider this . . . There are many, he says, who are nameless, who prophesy at the slightest excuse for some trivial cause both inside and outside temples; and there are some who wander about begging and roaming around cities and military camps; and they pretend to be moved as if giving some oracular utterance. It is an ordinary and common custom for each to say: 'I am God (or a son of God, or a divine Spirit). And I have come. Already the world is being destroyed. And you, O men, are to perish because of your iniquities. But I wish to save you. And you shall see me returning again with heavenly power. Blessed is he who has worshipped me now! But I will cast everlasting fire upon all the rest, both on cities and on country places. And men who fail to realize the penalties in store for them in vain repent and groan. But I will preserve for ever those who have been convinced by me'.

Then after that he says:

> Having brandished these threats they then go on to add incomprehensible, incoherent, and utterly obscure utterances, the meaning of which no intelligent person could discover; for they are meaningless and nonsensical, and give a chance for any fool or sorcerer to take the words in whatever sense he likes.

Noteworthy is Origen's remark about first-hand knowledge, the reference to many of these Syrian prophets during the period, and the apparent continuation of the charismata mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, especially the gifts of prophecy and glossolalia (Aune 1983: 359, n. 221). And even though Origen attests to a few in the third-century church who possessed prophetic gifts, he nonetheless rejects the claim that prophets similar to those of the O.T. lived in Celsus' day (7.8f.). Celsus' principal purpose in mocking these fanatical practices was to show how contemporary Christian prophets deceived weak people just as their leader had done in Palestine many years before (Chadwick 1953: 406, n. 6; 1966).

Eschatology

The Christian belief that the future life of blessedness is reserved only for those who live according to Christ's teaching was greatly ridiculed by Celsus (3.81). Doctrines concerning the blessed life and communion with God are vain hopes (3.80), and the biblical writers borrowed the idea of heaven as the soul's eternal resting place from Homer and Plato (7.28). Origen retorts that these borrowed the idea from Moses and the prophets. Celsus did believe in life after death, for as a Platonist his eschatological soteriology affirmed the belief in the immortality of the soul, the ability of philosophy to purify the soul, the need to escape from corporeal contamination, a release from the cycles of reincarnation and being with God in the afterlife (Simmons 1995: 264–303, 2015: 159–86). Where Celsus parts company with the Christians is the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh. Platonism could teach a final salvation *in* and *from* the body, but never, as Christians professed, *of the body*. Bodily resurrection was philosophically impossible. God indeed may give immortality to the soul, but he will not raise to life flesh which is, as Heraclitus taught, more worthless than dung (5.14). Finally, calling the Christian God a 'cook', Celsus mocks the belief in an eternal hell where all except Christians will burn with fire (5.15ff.). The Christians again borrowed this from Homer, he asserts, and besides, more noble doctrines about eternal punishments are found in the Mystery Religions (8.39f., 48). Furthermore, the idea of hell is used by Christians to scare people into becoming believers in Jesus. Christian eschatology is untenable because it is philosophically deficient in the 'true doctrine' of cyclical time – the same things happen in predetermined cycles, and God does not amend his work anew – and the correct theodicy posits that the same number of evils remain constant in the world at all times.

Jesus' followers: the church

Celsus had much to criticize about the church. To cast aspersions on the origins of Christianity, its doctrines and practices, he uses a Jew (1.28). And although he finds the Jews contemptible for having forsaken polytheism and for other reasons (1.2, 22; 3.6; 4.36; 5.59),[22] at least they worship according to their ancestral customs (5.25f.). On the other hand, Christians revolted from Hebrew traditions and became apostates (5.33). His objective in assailing the Jews was to show that Christianity must not be true because it derived from the false religion of the Hebrews (2.11). Connected with the charge of apostasy is the allegation that Christians hold secret associations which violate Roman law (1.1; 8.39).[23] Christianity is therefore an illegal religion.

Throughout the *C. Cels*, Origen informs us that his opponent consistently attacked the doctrines of the church. Celsus primarily argues that Christianity is based on a corruption of the *True Doctrine* passed down from ancient times by ignorant and superstitious men who misunderstood what they had received (5.65). Comparing Christian teaching with the silly theriomorphic religion of Egypt (3.17–21), Celsus concludes that it is vulgar, unreasonable and it easily persuades the illiterate masses (1.27). He will also rather frequently stress the variety of heretical doctrines circulating in the church to prove the disunity of the Christians. If they really possessed the truth, should they not all profess the same beliefs (5.62–5; 6.30–5; 7.53)? Many Christian doctrines resulted from the

corruption of ancient Greek authors, especially Plato (6.17f.; 7.14). It is therefore not surprising for Celsus to find inconsistencies in such teachings as cosmology (6.49), soteriology (6.68f.), pneumatology (6.70–2; 7.45) and universalism.

As a Platonic philosopher who emphasized the importance of living in accordance with reason, Celsus regularly attacks the faith of Christians, and this eventually developed into a major criticism in pagan polemics by the time of Porphyry. Hence he says that men should follow reason to acquire wisdom which comes from the World of Being after the soul is purified by philosophy. Otherwise opinions from the World of Becoming will impede his attainment of the truth. Because Christians follow opinions, they are ignorant and easily deceived (1.9). Wisdom is thus foolishness to those who say 'only believe' and 'don't ask any questions' (6.12). Christian believe erroneous and make-believe doctrines about Jesus because they cannot offer any sound reason for their 'faith' (1.13; 3.39; 4.11; 6.10, 12). Inasmuch as faith is inferior to reason, it is no wonder to Celsus that ignorant people are easily converted (6.12).

The new religion begun by a Jewish carpenter's son has borrowed many things from the Greeks and lacks the authority of antiquity: 'For Celsus it is axiomatic that nothing can be both new and true' (Chadwick 1966: 23). The novelty of Christianity was a major criticism found frequently in the *Discourse* (7.53; 8.12, 41ff.). Celsus' central thesis is the belief in an ancient doctrine passed down by wise men of old which contains the *True Doctrine* for humanity and has had a great civilizing influence upon the Mediterranean world. Without a foundation in truth, Christian worship and ritual are demonic in origin and worse than the practices of barbarian nations (1.5f., 6, 8; 7.62; 8.48).

The character and social status of Christians is the final criticism of the church made by Celsus. He maintains that Jesus' disciples were notorious and wicked (1.62), and contemporary believers are ignorant, unintelligent, carnal and win over no one to their cause who is wise or prudent (3.44–9; 7.39). Only low-class persons from the markets easily deceived by sorcery and who would never associate with cultured people, are converted to Christianity (3.50–4). The church welcomes 'sinners' because it cannot appeal to the righteous (3.65).

Christians and the Roman empire

Celsus argues that a disregard for *Discourse* passed down from antiquity which has preserved polytheistic culture can only lead to rebellion against the empire. Traditional polytheism is justified according to the divine providence which governs all things through the mediation of angels, demons and heroes. To these are assigned various geographical areas, so whoever worships God should also worship his subordinate powers (7.68–70). Christians cause sedition against the Roman government in the same way that the Hebrews originated in rebellion against Egypt (3.8). The Christians' rebellion stems from refusing to honour the daemons in the lower atmosphere who belong to God (8.2), assist him in governing the world in their assigned territories (8.33–5), receive sacrifices and prayers (8.24–7) and bless those under their care in conjunction with providence (8.7, 9, 34–8). History informs us that many have become sick, mad or committed suicide for disregarding polytheistic worship (8.45).

If Christians accepted these polytheistic customs, they would be tolerated (8.12), but since they worship a dead man who only recently lived, who was the leader of a seditious movement (8.14), they revolt without reason from the common belief (8.49). Christianity divides the 'Kingdom of God', raises factions and worships one who is God's enemy (9.11). If on the other hand the Romans abandoned their ancestral religious customs, their world would disintegrate because it is the worship of the gods that made the empire great (8.69). All people should swear by the emperor, for the material and spiritual fortunes from the gods come through him (8.63–68). Christians should support the emperor to maintain justice (8.73), serve in the army to defend their country (8.74), and hold public offices in the government for the maintenance of the laws and the support of religion (8.74f.). But since they stand aloof from the government, the military and society generally, they provoke the gods' wrath and anarchy, and should therefore be executed and driven to extinction (8.56).[24]

The superiority of Greek culture

As we have observed already, Celsus believed that Jesus and his followers borrowed many of their doctrines from the wise men of the Greeks who passed down the *True Doctrine* to posterity. This cultural *mos maiorum* contained the truth in such areas as philosophy, religion and literature, its claim to authority was found in its antiquity, and it has formed the basis for the high culture (*paideia*) of the Greeks. It has preserved Roman civilization. Celsus goes further, however, by explaining the affinities between Christianity and Graeco-Roman culture on the basis not only of the new borrowing from the old, but also of corrupting the *Discourse* by the use of sorcery. Hence there may be found a few admirable things about Christianity, but on the whole, because of its ludicrous practices and doctrines, this new and strange religion is greatly inferior to the traditional polytheism of the empire.

Celsus initially develops his argument by saying that Greek culture is superior to the customs of the barbarian nations (1.2). Since Christianity has much in common with barbarous customs, it too is inferior to Greek culture. Owing to its style and accuracy, Greek literature is superior to Christian scripture (6.1). And many of the writings of the Greeks are more ancient than those of Moses and the prophets (7.31). Celsus consistently relies upon Plato to prove his thesis (6.6ff.). For example, he says that Plato taught many great theological truths, yet he never espoused a belief in a particular God who descended to earth to talk with him (6.8). Plato is a more effective teacher of the problems of theology, and Celsus' proof text is *Timaeus* 28C: 'Now to find the Maker and Father of this universe is difficult, and after finding him it is impossible to declare him to all men' (6.42). Greek philosophers have demonstrated that God is knowable by synthesis, analysis and analogy, but the Christians cannot comprehend him because their theological epistemology is based on sense-perception (7.36), and their Logos concept is wedded to the flesh (7.42).

Celsus here follows the Platonic doctrine which affirmed that things are either intelligible, originating in the realm of Being; or sensible-visible, deriving from the realm of Becoming. Truth comes from Being which is apprehended by pure thought. Error, which is based on opinion, derives from Becoming. Intelligible objects are known by the soul trained in philosophy. If the Christians believe that a divine spirit came to earth in order to reveal truths to men, it was the same spirit that announced these Platonic truths long ago. But in fact the Christians are really lamed in mind, follow errors newly created by the magician Jesus, and live a sensual-carnal life far removed from *Discourse* passed down from antiquity.

Conclusions

The anti-Christian works published from 150–363 CE were characterized by an increasingly hostile attack upon Christianity by some of the best representatives of the cultured classes of the Roman empire. This description of the relationship between paganism and Christianity takes issue with current trends in modern scholarship which have often reinterpreted the *conflict* along the lines of *pluralism* and *syncretism* rather than accepting the argument presented in this chapter. There is no doubt that there were areas where the pagans and Christians cooperated and collaborated with each other, and because of this more conciliatory ambience, relatively speaking, we may in a limited sense define the pagan-Christian relationship based upon a pluralistic or syncretistic ideological matrix. We began with a rather dispassionate critic of Christianity (Celsus), then moved to a magistrate in the Roman imperial government who claimed to be benevolently correcting the errors of a man-made myth (Hierocles), and who at the same time 'behind closed doors' energetically persuaded Diocletian to launch the Great Persecution in February 303. The double threat posed by Porphyry to the Christians was his widely circulated anti-Christian works, one of which (*Contra Christianos*) appears to have exclusively used the scriptures against his enemies; and his apparently close collaboration with Diocletianic officials to initiate the persecution. Neoplatonic philosophers like Porphyry particularly opposed the Christian doctrines of revelation, eschatology, creation, God, soteriology and

Christology. The latter's tenets of the incarnation, the passion of Christ and the resurrection of the body grossly contradicted such cardinal Platonic teachings as divine immutability and impassibility, and simply seemed absurd to many philosophers who conceived reality as hierarchical and the cosmos as being divided into distinct ontological levels with the highly transcendent supreme principle at the top, and the material world at the bottom. As we will see in the final chapter of this volume, with the advent of an apostate emperor (Julian), we witness an anti-Christian programme which began with a number of non-aggressive policies, predominantly in favour of the pagans, but which over a short period of time continued to develop into an increasingly hostile move against the Christians. One can only imagine what Julian would have done if he had not been killed during his Persian campaign. What we do know is that during its most critical period when the pagan intelligentsia excoriated the doctrines of the church and caricatured the Christians as ignorant, gullible and demonized, the church was consistently growing throughout the empire, and this may indeed be the principal reason why the pagan attack became increasingly hostile.

The philosophical opposition to Christianity analysed in this chapter is significant for a number of reasons. First, it reveals something of the truculent nature of the intellectual conflict between pagans and Christians in the Roman empire. Second, it demonstrates the struggle with the meaning of a truly universal religion,[25] and whether this would be defined as a tolerant and inclusive polytheism supported by ancient religious customs, or as an intolerant and exclusive monotheism characterized by its particularity and a strong conviction that a recent and new divine revelation had been given to humanity. Third, the importance of the belief in *divine revelation*, espoused and defended by both pagan and Christian writers and focusing upon *prophetic revelation*, was one of the most important aspects of the pagan-Christian debate in antiquity, as has emerged in the discussion of *Discourse* of Celsus. Fourth, we have shown that there was a continual debate between both groups concerning the true nature of the God-man as he was perceived in classical Mediterranean spirituality. Finally, the close collaboration between Neoplatonic philosophers and the Roman government, represented in the writings of Hierocles, Porphyry and Julian, but hinted at in *Discourse* of Celsus,

Figure 39.3 The image of the bearded Christ from the Catacomb of Commodilla in Rome, fourth century CE; photo Wikicommons

accentuates the hostile nature of the opposition to Christianity during the period. Considering both the intensity of the criticism and the superb literary skills of the critics of Christianity that we have surveyed in this chapter, the most fascinating fact of all is not that the church eventually survived among so many cults in the Graeco-Roman world, but that it eventually emerged triumphant. The calm on the face of the famous fresco of Christ between an alpha and an omega in the Catacomb of Commodilla from the fourth century CE, one of the first images of Christ with a beard (Figure 39.3), perhaps reflects the growing confidence of the church in the century after Constantine in spite of philosophical opposition.

Notes

1 See Michael Bland Simmons (forthcoming 2017a), 'Persecutions of the Christians in the Roman Empire', *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*. Leiden: Brill.
2 The thesis of Andresen (1955) is that Celsus develops a philosophy of history to oppose that of Justin. Some scholars concur: Chadwick (1966: 22), Hovland (1984), Wilken (1984: 101), Hauck (1985–6: 211–25, 220) and Amphoux (1992: 251). On the other hand, Burke (1985: 107–16) seeks to refute Andresen's thesis.
3 Most scholars reject this: Chadwick (1953: xxiv–xxv, whose trans. is used herein), Gallagher (1982: 115), Benko (1984: 108), Wilken (1984: 95), Hoffmann (1987: 31) and Lanata (1987: 12f.).
4 Goranson (2007).
5 For a different view, see Blumell (2007).
6 See Chadwick (1947: 43). Chadwick (1953: x) observes when Celsus uses Platonic arguments, Origen relies on Stoic refutations and *vice versa*. Cf. Hovland (1984: 210).
7 Lact., Div. inst. 5.2; Eusebius, *C.Hier.* 4.19; *Mar. Pal.* 5.3; See also Barnes (1976, 1981: 21–3, 165), Forrat and Des Places (1986: 1–14, 17), Junod (1988), Speyer (1989) and Simmons (1995: 32–46). I rely upon these secondary sources extensively in the following analysis.
8 *Contra Hieroclem* 1. Hägg (1992) argues that the author was not Eusebius of Caesarea but Eusebius the Sophist. For a different view, see Jones (2006).
9 See Conybeare (1912) for the Greek text and English translation.
10 The structure is: Chapters 1–6 (Introduction); 7–12 (Philostratus, Bk. 1); 13–15 (Bk. 2); 16–22 (Bk. 3); 23–26 (Bk. 4); 27–29 (Bk. 5); 30–32 (Bk. 6); 33–40 (Bks. 7–8); 41–42 (on Fate & Necessity). See Campanini (1991: 20).
11 See now Simmons (2015). Porph., *Vit. Plot.* 17; 23.12ff.; cf. Rinaldi (1982). Since the first edition of the present volume there has been an increasing number of works published on Porphyry, on which see the bibliography of Simmons (2015).
12 For his life and works, see Kroll (1894), Bidez (1913), Courcelle (1953), O'Meara (1959), Wolff (1962), Hadot (1968), Demarolle (1972), Smith (1974), Bouffartigue and Patillon (1977), Geffcken (1978), Meredith (1980), Des Places (1982), Croke (1983, 1984), Frend (1987), Evangeliou (1989), Edwards (1990, 1991), Simmons (1995: 1–46, 216–27), Beatrice (1996), Simmons (1997), Berchman (2005), Jurado *et al.* (2006), Karamanolis and Sheppard (2007), Schott (2008), Morlet (2011), Johnson (2013), Digeser (2012) and Simmons (2015).
13 Eusebius, *HE* 6.19; Porph., *Vit. Plot.* 3, 14, 20; Hoffmann (1994) 16, 155), De Labriolle (1929), Hadot (1960), Pezella (1962).
14 For the *Phil. orac.* see Aug., *Civ. Dei* 10.32; also, e.g. Bidez (1913: 20–36), Hadot (1960: 240), Dodds (1961), Pezella (1962: 303), Wolff (1962), Rist (1964), O'Meara (1969), Des Places (1971), Majercik (1989), Busine (2005) and Simmons (2015)
15 See Simmons (2015).
16 See Simmons (forthcoming 2017c), 'Porphyry of Tyre'.
17 On Arnobius see Simmons (1995, 2015, forthcoming 2017a).
18 There is a huge literature on his scholarly achievements. See, e.g. Bidez (1913), O'Meara (1969), Hadot (1968), De Labriolle (1929: 386), Frassinetti (1953), Pezella (1962: 302–5), Dodds (1965: 126), Hadot (1960: 244), Demarolle (1972: 120), Meredith (1980: 1123ff.), Beatrice (1989: 267), Smith (1993), Karamanolis and Sheppard (2007), Morlet (2011), Johnson (2013) and Simmons (1995: 18–32, 218–22; 2015; forthcoming 2017c).
19 See, e.g. Harnack (1916), Hulen (1933), Frassinetti (1953), Schröder (1957), Anastos (1966), den Boer (1974), Casey (1976, 1990), Ferch (1982), Evangeliou (1989: 55), Beatrice (1993), and the pertinent works cited in Simmons (2015).
20 See Simmons (1995, 2001, 2002, 2009, 2015, forthcoming 2017c).
21 See Feldman (1990: 122), Benko (1984: 150), Borret (1984: 175f.), Mosetto (1986) and Puiggali (1987).

22 For Celsus' criticism of the Jews, see, e.g. Chadwick (1953: xx), Frend (1984: 163), Wilken (1984: 112–17), Hoffmann (1987: 36) and Martinez (1990–1: 201f.).
23 On illegal associations, see, e.g. Chadwick (1953: xvi) and Hoffmann (1987: 35).
24 On the charge of sedition, see, e.g. Chadwick (1953: xix), Dal Covolo (1979), Benko (1984: 46f., 56), Frend (1984: 177f.), Hovland (1984: 194ff.), Wilken (1984: 117–25), Hoffmann (1987: 34) and Feldman (1990: 124f.).
25 See now Simmons (2015).

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40

POPULAR GRAECO-ROMAN RESPONSES TO CHRISTIANITY

Craig de Vos

Modern historians have noted that there was no official persecution of Christians before the mid third century. In other words, there was no empire-wide ban on Christianity that was enforced from the top down, even if being a Christian was considered a criminal offence. Rather, prior to that time, any actions that were taken against Christians were local and sporadic. As such, they would have been largely due to public opinion.[1]

The Roman legal system was accusatorial. It relied upon an accuser, who laid the charge and presented the case, rather than upon official investigation.[2] Consequently, for a Christian to be charged before a provincial governor meant that he or she would have been denounced and prosecuted by neighbours, family or friends (e.g. Pliny, *Epistulae* 10.96.2; 10.97.2; Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.9; Justin Martyr, *Apology* 2.2). That such a major step would be taken suggests that Christians would have been disliked, resented and/or feared. Indeed, for neighbours, family or friends to bring them to trial suggests that animosity and resentment would have built up over a considerable period.

This is consistent with social-scientific analysis of conflict. 'Conflict' is understood as a process that involves 'an escalating sequence of responses between two disputants'. It begins with the recognition of differences in attitudes, norms, values and beliefs between those concerned, which may be accompanied by feelings of resentment. Conflict-proper only occurs when these differences become intolerable. For this second step to occur, some sort of 'trigger' (that is some significant incident or event) is normally required (de Vos 1999a: 11–12). However, whether or not overt conflict occurs also depends on other social factors, especially the nature of social ties within that society. For example, if a Christian community was itself socially diverse and its members had significant ties to the different social strata of its local society (especially if there were strong and positive ties to the ruling elite), then the incidence of conflict with non-Christians would have been much less than a Christian community that had a much more restricted pattern of social ties (de Vos 1999a).

Consequently, the incidence of recorded conflict does not necessarily have any bearing on the general perception of Christians. In other words, the fact that actual cases of harassment of Christians are recorded only infrequently does not weaken the assertion that the Christians were the subject of popular resentment. Such accusations are quite literally the 'tip of the iceberg'. Apart from feelings of resentment that were not acted upon, there also would have been a spate of (unofficial) social and economic sanctions, and verbal and physical abuse that simply would not have been recorded. Presumably this would have occurred before Christians were ever brought before magistrates.[3] After all, history tends to preserve the unusual and the extreme, not the ordinary, average and everyday.

Therefore, the question that we face is, 'What did the average person in the Graeco-Roman world dislike about Christians?' or, to put it another way, 'What did Christians do, or not do, that elicited such resentment and hostility?' We will begin our exploration of this issue by looking for traces of popular opinion in the later New Testament, followed by Christian and non-Christian sources from the second and subsequent centuries. Following that, we will seek to answer the question of why they perceived Christians in this light.

Evidence from the later New Testament

The author of 1 Peter suggests that his readers are experiencing conflict and oppression because of their severance of social ties and their generally separatist way of life (Elliott 1986: 67–8; Goppelt 1993: 39–40; Achtemeier 1996: 177; Kraybill 1996: 44; Carter 2009: 44; Caulley 2011: 205; Cook 2011: 222). Indeed, he specifically asserts that 'they are surprised that you do not now join them in the same wild profligacy, and they abuse you' (1 Pet. 4:4; see also 1:14–19; 2:11–12; 4:2–4). Given John's emphasis on a similar withdrawal and separatism in the Letters to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2–3), it is likely that this also lay behind the sufferings that his readers were experiencing or that he expected that they would experience if they were living out their faith (Kraybill 1996: 42; Blount 2009: 8–11, 50–84; Carter 2009). In other words, Christians were being harassed by their neighbours because they were seen as anti-social. They had stopped taking part in normal social activities (which were now considered immoral from a Christian perspective) and they had thereby strained their relations with family, friends and neighbours.

Intimately linked to this separatism and social withdrawal was the Christians' withdrawal from the traditional cults of their cities. After all, religion was completely integrated in Graeco-Roman society. Temples and shrines were ubiquitous, and they performed a range of religious, political, economic and social functions. For example, the major religious festivals (which included public feasts and often gladiatorial or athletic games) were the high-points of the city's social calendar. It is quite clear that 'everyone' ordinarily participated in these festivals (see, for example, Pausanias, 10.32.8ff; Xenophon, *Ephesiaca* 1.2.2–3; Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 2.26; MacMullen and Lane 1992: 45–9; Koester 2009: 10–11; Caulley 2011: 199). Apart from joining the processions, it was customary for small altars to be set up outside houses, and households would offer sacrifices as the processions passed by (Price 1984: 111–12; Kraybill 1996: 53 n.97). Although participation was not 'compulsory', as such, there generally was no good reason not to take part. Therefore, when Christians stopped doing so their changed behaviour must have been immediately noticeable to their family, friends and neighbours (Oakes 2001: 89–91; see also De Ste. Croix 1963: 25; Price 1984: 123; Clark 2004: 6–9; Carter 2009: 36–7).

In addition, travelling markets and fairs were often held in temple precincts and in conjunction with religious festivals. Presumably, a Christian would not take part in these if she or he took seriously the requirement to avoid idolatry. Similarly, Christians would no longer belong to a social club or a trade guild (*thiasos/collegium*) since this would mean participating in religious rites in honour of its patron deity. Consequently, withdrawal from these activities because of their cultic association would have meant an almost complete non-participation in society. In other words, not to take part in processions, sacrifices, feasts, fairs, and clubs and guilds would have meant shunning their neighbours.[4]

This Christian attitude of separatism and socio-religious exclusivity is quite explicit in 1 Peter:

> As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct . . . You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.
>
> *(1:14–15, 18–19a)*

> Let the time that is past suffice for doing what the Gentiles like to do, living in licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry. They are surprised that you do not now join them in the same wild profligacy, and they abuse you.
>
> *(4:13–14)*

Indeed, the New Testament is full of exhortations to avoid 'idolatry' (for example, Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25; 1 Cor. 6:9–11; 10:7–14; 2 Cor. 6:16; Gal. 5:20–21; Eph. 5:5; 1 Thess. 1:9–10; 1 John 5:21; Rev. 2:14–16, 20–5; 21:8; 22:15). If involvement in 'idolatrous' practices were avoided, this would have meant social withdrawal and offence to ordinary Greeks and Romans. Obviously some early Christians, such as the more well-to-do Christians at Corinth (1 Cor. 8:1–11:1) and some among the seven churches in Revelation (Rev. 3:1–4), did not. Where Christians did not withdraw from 'idolatrous practices', conflict with non-Christians does not appear to have been a significant issue (Kraybill 1996: 44; De Vos 1999a: 205–31, 271–5; Blount 2009: 9–10; Carter 2009: 34–9). This, in itself, attests to the connection between the early Christian tendency towards socio-religious exclusivity (as reflected in the majority of the New Testament authors), and the reprisals that were exacted against Christians.

Added to this, of course, would be the Christians' offence to Graeco-Roman religious sensibilities. Rejection of the gods and their cults was greatly resented by the common people (de Vos 1999a: 46–8; see also Stoops 1989: 83; Caulley 2011: 204–5). It would have been a personal affront to their values and beliefs, indeed to their whole world view. The traditional gods and their cults were still held in high esteem, and were the subject of strong personal devotion among the common people (de Vos 1999a: 43–5, 48–50). Furthermore, the people's relationship with the gods was understood in a contractual sense. This relationship was described by the Romans as *pax deorum* – the belief that they had peace with the gods provided that they kept up their end of the contract. In reality, this meant that their personal safety and well-being, along with that of their town, depended upon them maintaining the good favour of the gods by correctly performing the appropriate rites (Garnsey and Saller 1987: 163, 175; de Vos 1999a: 43–56; Clark 2004: 20; Green 2010: 123–4).

Consequently, since the gods were understood to protect the town and its inhabitants, the behaviour of the Christians was seen as a direct threat to their welfare and safety (Janssen 1979: 141; Sordi 1994 [1988]: 203; de Vos 1999a: 51–3; Carter 2009: 38; Green 2010: 123–4; Wagemakers 2010: 341; Caulley 2011: 200). This alone would have been sufficient to provoke considerable hostility against Christians.

Such resentment would have been even greater due to the increase in popularity and importance of the imperial cult. Although the imperial cult predated Domitian (81–96 CE), and it is unclear to what extent Domitian himself demanded the use of divine addresses, it appears that there was a change or growth in the cult during his reign (Collins 1984: 71–2; Thompson 1990: 96–116, 159; Friesen 1993: 165–6, 249, 2001: 147–9; Slater 1998: 233–8; Cook 2011: 113–7, 136; *contra* Cuss 1974: 57–8). Many remains exist of temples built for the cult, especially in Asia Minor (see Figure 40.2 for Pisidian Antioch). Indeed, we know that under Domitian a new provincial imperial cult was established at Ephesus and the Ephesian Olympics were instituted in his honour (Kraybill 1996: 27–8; see also Friesen 1993: 147–9, 160–4, 2001: 43–6; Cook 2011: 116–7). Furthermore, imperial cult images were quite frequent on coins from the latter half of the first century (see Figures 40.1a, b and c).

As it happens, the seven churches of Revelation 2–3 were all located in major imperial cult centres. Revelation 13 strongly suggests that the imperial cult, described as the worship of a haughty and blasphemous beast (Rev. 13:1–10), was both prevalent and popular in the late first century.[5] Therefore, when John attacked the cult (as he did, for example, in Rev. 14:6–12) he was attacking something that was a major socio-religious institution, a significant vehicle for the expression of loyalty to Rome by provincials (Friesen 1995: 249), and the product of local, popular enthusiasm (Price 1984: 78–9; Garnsey and Saller 1987: 165; Frilingos 2004: 22–5; Koester 2009: 15–6).

Figures 40.1a and b Coins of Tiberius and Gaius (Caligula), in which each is described as the 'son of the divine Augustus'

Figure 40.1c A coin issued by Titus, commemorating Vespasian as 'divine'

Figure 40.2 Remains of the Temple of Augustus and Rome at Pisidian Antioch. Photo J. C. Coulston

Furthermore, even as early as Tiberius' reign (14–37 CE), Tacitus claims that 'the town of Cyzicus was charged with neglecting the cult of the deified Augustus' (*Annals* 4.36). So criticism of and opposition to this institution would also have been perceived as a threat to the city's welfare. If John's attitude was at all common among Christians in this period, then an apparent increase in anti-Christian sentiment should not be surprising.[6]

At the same time, rejection of the traditional gods and cults, as well as the imperial cult, could have had a significant impact on the local economy. Cult festivals, with their processions, sacrifices, feasts, fairs and games, were a major source of revenue.[7] Resentment of Christian practices due to loss of income is quite apparent in Acts 16:19–21 and especially in Acts 19:23–41 (see de Vos 1999b; Gaventa 2003: 275–6). In the latter, the Ephesian silversmiths feared the impact of the preaching of Paul and his companions on their livelihoods, which were intimately associated with the cult of Ephesian Artemis. Indeed, the temple and its cult was the linchpin of the Ephesian economy. Therefore, the silversmiths incited the mob to gather in the theatre (see Figure 40.3), dragging two companions of Paul and Barnabas along with them. After much confusion, the town clerk managed to quiet them down and the crowd left the theatre (Stoops 1989: 73, 83–4; Sordi 1994 [1988]: 203; Gaventa 2003: 269–76; Brinks 2009: 781–2). It is likely that such a scenario would have been repeated in many other cities.

In summary, then, it would seem that the Christians were resented because they refused to take a full part in society, snubbed their neighbours, spurned the gods and thereby threatened their neighbours' livelihoods and the safety of their towns, and offended their neighbours' social, political and religious values and beliefs. Consequently, it is not surprising that Christians were abused and harassed. Neither is it surprising that they were denounced to the authorities, even if this is recorded somewhat infrequently.

At the same time, it is clear that the Christians were denounced for what they perceived to be trumped-up charges. For example, the author of 1 Peter suggests that his readers were the subject of abuse and slanderous accusations. Unfortunately, he does not explicitly indicate what these accusations might have been, except that he repeatedly uses the terms 'to do wrong' and 'wrongdoers' (2:12; 3:16–17; 4:14). The fact that both his readers, and some among the readers of Revelation, are denounced and suffer for the 'name' of 'Christ' or 'as a Christian' (1 Pet. 4:14–16; Rev. 2:17; 3:5, 10, 12)

Figure 40.3 The theatre in Ephesus. Photo Philip F. Esler

would suggest that there was some overwhelming stigma or crime associated with belonging to the Christian community.[8] But the nature of these charges is not explicit. Given the circumstances that Luke describes in Acts 16:19–21, the most likely accusation against the historical Paul and Silas at Philippi would have been one of practising magic or witchcraft (de Vos 1999b; Reimer 2003: 133–6). However, due to Luke's apologetic agenda, this charge is down-played. Instead, the charge that Luke records (or constructs), namely, 'they advocate customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or practice' (Acts 16:21), is quite ambiguous. Therefore, while it is clear that Christians were denounced simply for being Christians, and this was due to an association with some crime or stigma, the nature of this is nowhere explicit in the New Testament. It only becomes explicit when we turn to subsequent writers.

Evidence from other sources

Tacitus claims that Nero blamed the Christians for the Great Fire of Rome in 64 CE because they were 'hated for their atrocities' by the mob (*Ann.* 15.44).[9] Suetonius also describes the Christians as a group 'given to a new and vile superstition', and records Nero's harassment of them. But he does not specifically link this to the fire (*Nero* 16.2; see also Cuss 1974: 150). Therefore, although a connection between actions against Christians and the fire may be somewhat tenuous, there is little doubt that in the later half of the first century and the first half of the second century the Roman mob disliked Christians because they believed them to be guilty of a range of anti-social

vices (Clark 2004: 39; Green 2010: 51; Wagemakers 2010). This is most apparent in the 'lynching' at Lyons in 177 CE (see Figure 40.4). On this occasion, Eusebius tells us that the local Christians:

> [e]ndured the attacks which the whole mass of the people heaped upon them, clamours, blows, hailings, plunderings, stonings and confinements, and all that an infuriated mob is wont to employ against foes and enemies. Then they were conducted to the market-place by the tribune and the authorities presiding over the city; and when they had been questioned before the whole multitude, and given their testimony, they were shut up in prison . . . From that time on the holy martyrs endured punishments beyond all description . . . Maturus, then, and Sanctus and Blandina and Attalus were led to contend with wild beasts to the amphitheatre, and to the public spectacle of heathen inhumanity . . . they ran the gauntlet of scourgings, as is the custom of the place; they were dragged by wild beasts; they endured all that the cries of a maddened populace ordered, now from this side, now from that; and last of all, the iron chair, which fried their bodies and choked them with smoke. Nor even at this point did the heathen stop . . . Blandina, suspended on a stake, was exposed as food to the wild beasts which were let loose against her . . . And after the scourging, after the wild beasts, after the frying-pan, she was at last thrown into a basket and presented to a bull. For a time the animal tossed her . . . Then she too was sacrificed.
>
> *(Eusebius,* Hist. Eccl. *5.1.7–8, 16, 37–8, 41, 56; Stevenson 1957: 31–9)*

What is significant, however, is that Christians at Lyons who denied their faith were not spared. Eusebius notes that 'those who had denied when the Christians were first arrested were also imprisoned with them and shared the same fate; for on this occasion their denial had profited them nothing' (*Hist. Eccl.* 5.1.33). This strongly suggests that they were specifically executed because they were thought to be guilty of various anti-social crimes. Indeed, Eusebius himself suggests that the fury

Figure 40.4 Amphitheatre at Lyons, scene of the martyrdom of Christians in 177 CE. Photo Everett Ferguson

of the crowd was a result of rumours of 'Thyestean feasts and Oedipdean intercourse, and things which it is not possible to say aloud or to think' (*Hist. Eccl.* 5.1.14; cf. Athenagoras, *Leg. pro Christ.* 3; see also Green 2010: 123; Wagemakers 2010: 337–9).

Similarly, when the magistrate reads out the charge of 'being a Christian' against Polycarp, the crowd immediately demands his execution (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 12.2). Even at the end of the second century, Tertullian can still exclaim that in trials of Christians 'only one thing is looked for, and only one, what is needful for popular hatred is the confession of the name' (*Apol.* 2.3).

From this it seems likely that to be a Christian in the second century meant that one was perceived to be some sort of criminal or engaged in illicit, anti-social, immoral activity. This is no different from what we saw in relation to the later New Testament. However, in the second century the nature of such accusations does become explicit. Indeed, it is clear that, for the common people at least, Christianity was strongly associated with crimes such as ritual murder and the sacrifice of infants, cannibalism, incest and other illicit sexual activity, conspiracy to commit arson, 'hatred of humanity', and the practice of magic (Justin Martyr, *Apol.* 1.26; Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 8.4–5; 9.2–5; Tert., *Apology* 7.1; Athenagoras, *Leg. pro Christ.* 3; *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 15, 20; Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96).[10] For example, Tertullian sarcastically exclaims that Christians ought to be tortured to find out 'how many butchered babies each of us had eaten, how many acts of incest each had performed in the dark' (*Apol.* 2.5). Minucius Felix has an imaginary 'pagan' critic describe Christians as a 'band of questionable and illegal outlaws' who 'unite themselves against the gods'. Furthermore, he claims they are:

> [p]eople who assemble illiterates from the dregs of society . . . and so organise a rabble of impious conspirators, banded together by nocturnal meetings, ritual fasts and abnormal feasts, not for any religious devotion but for superstitious rites . . . everywhere they introduce a 'so-called' religion of lust, a promiscuous fraternity by which promiscuous behaviour becomes incest, under the guise of a sacred title.
>
> *(*Octavius *8.4–9.3)*

Apuleius says of one woman, whom most scholars consider a Christian, that:

> She was like a filthy toilet into which virtually every vice had flowed. She was cruel and debauched, addicted to sex and wine, recalcitrant and stubborn, greedy in her petty thievery and extravagant in her loathsome excesses, an enemy of fidelity and a foe to chastity . . . she despised and mocked all of the gods, and, instead of following true piety, she hid behind a false and wicked god, whom she called 'the one and only god', to create hollow rites in order to deceive everyone, including her wretched husband. She gave herself over to liquor from day-break and to licentiousness until sunset.
>
> *(*Metamorphoses *9.14)*

In this regard, Christians were also thought to worship the head of an ass (Tert., *Apol.* 16; Damocritus, *Fr. Hist. Gr.* 4.377; see also McGowan 1994: 417). For example, the imaginary pagan critic of Christianity in Minucius Felix's *Octavius* claims that:

> [t]heir empty and idiotic superstition actually boasts of criminal activity . . . unless there was some foundation to it, perceptive rumour would not associate it with blatant and shameful forms of depravity. I am led to believe that by some stupid impulse they consecrate and worship the head of an ass, the basest of all beasts, a religion worthy of the morals that sired it.
>
> *(9.3)*

This accusation, which is also reflected in a famous graffito from the Palatine area of Rome (see Figure 9.6 in this volume), would appear to be linked to a similar accusation made against the Jews

by several Hellenistic writers. In particular, Apion specifically linked worship of an ass's head to ritual murder and cannibalism (Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.79–80, 91–102), and this link may be implied in the passage just cited from Minucius Felix (McGowan 1994: 417). It is possible that this derogatory scrawling was also intended to convey this same accusation.

Not surprisingly, given the nature of these accusations, Christians were seen as a threat or danger to society. In particular, they were thought to be corrupt teachers who deceived women and young people. They were also accused of undermining family life, that is, of seeking to split households (*Acts of Paul and Thecla* 8–15, 20).[11] In this regard, it is possible that heads of households may have become suspicious of adulterous affairs if their wives were entertaining strange men in their homes during the day, or they were getting up early to go to secretive pre-dawn rituals (MacDonald 1997: 71; see also Benko 1984: 126).

Although we cannot be certain how much the average Greek or Roman knew of Christian rituals, certain practices, such as exorcism, speaking in tongues, praying 'in the name of Jesus', and the sign of the cross, could have been seen as magical rites.[12] Accusations of practising magic would have been particularly important given that there appears to have been a growing fear of harmful magic over the course of the second and third centuries (Wypustek 1997: 283, 287; Rives 2003). Such a fear may indeed be implied by Suetonius' reference to Christianity as a 'wicked' or 'criminal' superstition (*malefica superstitio*; Suetonius, *Nero* 16.2; see also Janssen 1979: 157).

In the second and subsequent centuries, the refusal of Christians to worship the traditional gods is also very prominent. They are frequently accused of 'atheism' (Justin Martyr, *Apol.* 1.5–6; Tert., *Apol.* 10.1; *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 12.2; Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet* 38; Apul., *Met.* 9.14).[13] For example, Minucius Felix's imaginary pagan critic claims that 'they disdain shrines as if tombs; they mock the gods; they ridicule at our most sacred rituals; deserving sympathy themselves, they pity our priests (if you can believe it)' (Min. Fel., *Oct.* 8.4). Indeed, such a complaint was probably the primary problem, as everything else stemmed from it (Benko 1984: 4; Sordi 1994 [1988]: 160; MacDonald 1997: 59; Green 2010: 122). This would also explain why Pliny only dismissed charges against people who denied they were Christians 'once they had recited after me a prayer of invocation to the gods and had made wine and incense offerings to your statue' (*Ep.* 10.96; cf. Green 2010: 122–3). Correspondingly, they became the scapegoats for the natural disasters experienced by local communities (De Ste. Croix 1963: 24–6; Frend 1967: 177; Janssen 1979: 132–3; Wilken 1984: 63; Lane Fox 1986: 425–6; Sordi 1994 [1988]: 56–7, 70, 160; Clark 2004: 47; Wagemakers 2010: 341). Although somewhat sarcastic, Tertullian's famous jibe is not an outrageous exaggeration:

> If the Tiber rises to the city walls, if the Nile does not cover the flood-plains, if the heavens don't move or if the earth does, if there is a famine or a plague, the roar is at once: 'The Christians to the lion!' Really! All of them to one lion?
>
> *(*Apol. *40.2)*

Indeed, there was mob violence against Christians in Asia Minor during the reign of Antoninus Pius (138–61) as a result of natural disasters (Williams 1997: 897; see also Justin Martyr, *Apol.* 1.68; Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.* 4.26.10). They were blamed for earthquakes in about 152, and plagues and a Parthian attack in about 165. Christians were also blamed for earthquakes in the 230s.[14] Frend even suggests that the Decian persecutions (250–1) can largely be attributed to this popular reaction against Christians in the face of natural disasters (1987: 6).

Popular resentment of Christians in this period can also be linked to the increasing importance of the imperial cult (McGowan 1994: 440; Caulley 2011: 198–200). Thompson, however, contends that the role of the cult should not be overemphasised, because the issue of adherence to traditional cults was the main issue (1990: 164).[15] Yet, in a sense, the cult *was* traditional – at least in the Hellenistic east. As we have seen, even in the first century it was both widespread and popular. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that mob violence towards Christians was more

pronounced during the major imperial festivals.[16] This is not surprising if observance of the cult was seen as a direct expression of loyalty to Rome and the emperor, upon whose goodwill the cities in the Hellenistic east relied for their stability and prosperity.

Finally, ordinary people may also have denounced Christians to the authorities for economic reasons. Some, conceivably, may have denounced relatives, friends or neighbours in the hope of gaining their goods. After all, that was the reward under Roman law for those who could successfully prosecute another (Lane Fox 1986: 425; see, for example, Suetonius, *Nero* 10.1). It is more likely, however, that economic motivation was linked to the impact of Christian attitudes and practices on people's livelihoods, as we saw earlier in the case at Ephesus (Acts 19:23–41). For example, Pliny notes that following his actions against Christians 'meat from sacrifices is again being sold everywhere, although until recently hardly anyone seemed to be buying it' (*Ep.* 10.96). In other words, there had been a decline in the sale of meat left over from sacrifices that he directly attributed to the Christians. In the context of the numerous denunciations he mentions, it would not be surprising if many of the informers had been those most affected by this (Thompson 1990: 131; Kraybill 1996: 52–3; Caulley 2011: 198). Anyone whose occupation was associated with temple practice would have been disadvantaged by Christian non-participation.

As we saw in relation to the New Testament writings, it seems quite clear from later Christian and non-Christian sources that Christians were disliked, or even feared, because of the threat that they were deemed to pose to society. They rejected the gods, which was believed to harm people's very livelihoods and welfare. Christians destroyed families and households, thus also weakening the very fabric of society. They were thought to engage in magic, and they were suspected and accused of engaging in a range of illicit, immoral and criminal acts. Indeed, by the end of the second century, such anti-social attitudes and activities had become synonymous with the very name of 'Christian'.

Why were the Christians resented?

It seems quite clear that Christians were the objects of popular resentment. On the surface this appears to derive from their separatist and anti-social tendencies, and their failure to worship the traditional gods. However, scholars generally argue that the popular belief that Christians were involved in immoral or illicit activity arose from misunderstandings of the Christians' practices, liturgies and language. For example, it is suggested that the accusations of cannibalism arose from outsiders misinterpreting the words of the Eucharist. Expressions such as 'this is my body . . . this is my blood' would have naturally led to the assumption that Christians practised cannibalism. Similarly, the Christian ban on abortion and the exposure of infants was linked to this accusation of cannibalism, that is, the ban was introduced so that there would be excess infants for their cannibalistic practices (Benko 1984: 60; Goppelt 1993: 41; Sordi 1994 [1988]: 32–3, 197; Wagner 1994: 133; Wagemakers 2010: 343).

Accusations of incest are said to have arisen from a misunderstanding of the Christians' use of terms such as 'brother' and 'sister' or 'love' (Wagner 1994: 133; see also Sordi 1994 [1988]: 32–3; Clark 2004: 20; Wagemakers 2010: 343), and the practice of kissing one another (Benko 1984: 79, 98; Wagemakers 2010: 343).[17] Similarly, accusations of adultery are attributed to women entertaining strange men in their homes during the day (MacDonald 1997: 71), and the closed, nocturnal nature of their meetings (Wagemakers 2010: 343).

Accusations of magic are said to have arisen from the way that Christians sang hymns, spoke in tongues, prayed 'in the name of Jesus', made the sign of the cross and engaged in exorcism. All such activities would have been seen as 'magical' by outsiders. Indeed, the use of gesture, speaking in gibberish and invoking the name of a powerful god were all common in magical incantations.[18] Furthermore, accusations of practising magic also could have been linked to the Christian practice of holding secretive nocturnal rituals.[19] Some have even suggested that these accusations arose because outsiders confused Christians with Gnostics or Montanists, who possibly did engage in such activities (Benko 1984: 67; Wypustek 1997: 277–9; cf. Wagemakers 2010: 344–5).

Can this popular perception of illicit and immoral activity be attributed simply to misunderstanding? In the first place, if accusations of immoral and illicit activity were simply based on misunderstanding, how do we account for the fact that the same accusations were made repeatedly over a very long span of time? As we saw, such accusations may have been made in the time of the later New Testament. Even if they were not, they certainly were by the time of Pliny (early second century), and they continued until at least the early third century (De Ste Croix 1963: 20–1; Krodel 1971: 261; Wagemakers 2010). Surely it is unreasonable to attribute a belief that is sustained over a period of more than a century (if not two centuries) simply to a misunderstanding.

Furthermore, the claim of misunderstanding assumes that ordinary outsiders had little substantial knowledge of Christian beliefs and practices. Given the nature of life in ancient cities, however, this is highly questionable. The common people in Graeco-Roman cities spent much of their time in communal spaces and in public activities, because their places of residence were very small. An average flat or apartment was really used only for sleeping and storing possessions – people relied upon baths, public latrines, temples, shops, cafes and inns for everything else. At the same time, streets were generally very narrow (seldom more than a few metres wide) and there was an extremely high population density. Consequently, Graeco-Roman cities were face-to-face communities, that is, they lived very public lives. Gossip was rampant. There was little privacy and few secrets, especially as town-planning, social structures and social institutions specifically sought to minimise them (de Vos 1999a: 28–37).

In light of this, it is hard to imagine that outsiders did not know a considerable amount about Christian practices and beliefs. Since early churches generally met in houses, workshops and apartments (de Vos 1999a: 147–50, 258–61; Balch 2004; Horrell 2004), streets were very narrow (see Figures 40.5 and 40.6 as an indication of how narrow the streets were and how closely people lived together), and housing was very dense, many outsiders would have heard quite a lot of Christian preaching and teaching.

For example, in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, Thecla sat at her window across the street listening as Paul preached to the church that met in the house of Onesiphorus. She became a Christian as a direct result of what she heard. On the other hand, Thecla's mother (who no doubt also heard Paul's preaching) announced to Thecla's husband-to-be that 'she is obsessed with a foreigner

Figure 40.5 First-century street from Jerusalem. Photo Merrill Kitchen

Figure 40.6 Part of the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem. Photo Merrill Kitchen

teaching deceptive and crafty teachings . . . He claims we must fear only one God and live in abstinence' (*Acts of Paul and Thecla* 7–9). This is hardly a gross misunderstanding or misrepresentation of early Christian beliefs. Given the communal nature of city life, Christian beliefs and practices no doubt became a topic of conversation when people met at the local wells, the baths, the latrines, the shops, the cafes and so on.

Therefore, the argument that the popular accusations arose from misunderstanding due to ignorance or limited knowledge is hard to sustain, even if the Christians continually protested that their teachings and practices were being misunderstood (for example, Justin Martyr, *Apol.*; Min. Fel., *Oct.*; Tert., *Apol.*; Origen, *Contra Celsum*). After all, people could have made inquiries about the Christians, as Pliny did of those brought before him (*Ep.* 10.96), if they were concerned and wanted to get all of the facts. Consequently, if there was any 'misunderstanding' it must have been because outsiders were quite satisfied that they already knew the truth. They did not feel any need to investigate. Rather, as a number of scholars have suggested, because the Christians were seen as anti-social (both withdrawing from normal socio-religious activities and engaging in secret nocturnal gatherings) and they refused to worship the gods, it was simply *assumed* that they must have been involved in immoral and illicit activity (Krodel 1971: 261; Frend 1979: 35; Phillips 1991: 262; McGowan 1994: 437; Sordi 1994 [1988]: 31, 202). People who did such things were surely capable of doing anything!

This popular assumption that the Christians must have been involved in a range of immoral and illicit activity is consistent with social-scientific analyses of Graeco-Roman society. As a number of scholars have noted (for example Malina and Neyrey 1996; Crook 2004), the ancient Mediterranean

world appears to have been a group-oriented or 'collectivist' society. In other words, Greeks and Romans gave priority to group rather than personal goals and their sense of identity was largely dependant upon the groups to which they belonged. Within such cultures people tended to think 'sociologically' rather than psychologically. As such, they were not really concerned with understanding each other in terms of the 'introspective, psychological ways' characteristic of modern Western cultures (Malina and Neyrey 1996: xiii). Rather, they assessed themselves and others in terms of group-determined stereotypes. People were classified according to their family, race, place of origin and class. Indeed, if you knew these, you knew the person (Malina and Neyrey 1996: 7–17).

This 'stereotypic' approach is also very evident in the body of ancient work known as the 'physiognomic' literature. Such literature assumed that one could tell another person's character from the way that he or she looked (Malina and Neyrey 1996: 100–8; Parsons 2006). In other words, it assumed that 'all internal qualities may be known rather easily from external traits and behaviors', which were held to be fixed and unchanging (Malina and Neyrey 1996: 149–50; de Vos 2001). Consequently, from their observation of Christian beliefs, values and practices it could be concluded that Christians *were* anti-social. And if they were anti-social then it was to be expected that they would be capable of any manner of anti-social activity. Furthermore, if one Christian was an anti-social atheist, then they all were.

This use of stereotypic accusations is also consistent with a sociological understanding of deviance, specifically, the labelling theory of deviance. According to this theory, 'deviance' is behaviour that is perceived to violate a group's norms and values. As such, deviance is not so much an inherent characteristic as a reaction. A person becomes a deviant via a 'labelling process' such that the person's behaviour is perceived to violate the group's norms and values, this perception is disseminated within the group, and the person is subjected to a status degradation ritual and receives the appropriate punishment.[20] Deviance labelling is particularly common in collectivist societies (de Vos 1999b), where it serves to establish and maintain social boundaries (Esler 1994: 141; with some modification also Barclay 1995: 117). This particular theory is helpful because it shows that people can be labelled as deviants, and treated as such, simply based on the way that their actions are perceived. Provided that their actions are seen to violate the norms and values of the dominant group, so that they constitute a threat to that group, it does not matter whether they have actually done what they are said to have done.

In light of this, it would appear that the popular perception of Christians as engaged in immoral and illicit activity involves stereotypic thinking. The specific accusations (such as cannibalism, incest and magic) should be seen as examples of deviance labels. As such, they do not require any basis in 'reality'. Rather, they simply function to label those so accused as anti-social, in order to strengthen the boundaries within society and exert social control. That these accusations against the Christians are deviance labels becomes quite apparent when we look at the similar accusations that were made against other individuals and groups. These same accusations were extremely common, and in many cases it is quite apparent that they were levelled in the absence of any teachings or practices that could have been misunderstood (see McGowan 1994: 413–14).

For example, Lucius Catilinus and his co-conspirators were accused of incest, human sacrifice and cannibalism. Sallust claims that they drank blood to seal their conspiracy, whereas Dio Cassius accuses them of sacrificing a child and eating his intestines (Sallust, *Catiline* 22; Dio, 37.30; see also Benko 1984: 61; McGowan 1994: 431). Plutarch goes even further. He claims that Catilinus had 'once been accused of raping his own daughter and of murdering his own brother' and 'had corrupted a large number of the city's youth', but together with his co-conspirators had taken oaths among themselves, one of which involved sacrificing a man and eating his flesh (*Cic.* 865–6).

Such accusations were common against those suspected of conspiracy (Corbett 1997: 849; MacDonald 1997: 60; Wagemakers 2010: 352–3). Cicero makes an accusation of cannibalism against another political opponent (Cic., *In Vatinium interrogatio* 6.14; see McGowan 1994: 432). Such accusations were also levelled against Apollonius of Tyana who, with his associates, was said by

Domitian to have 'sacrificed a boy in order to foresee the future' (Philostr., *Vita Apollonii* 7.9; see also McGowan 1994: 432). Apuleius was brought to trial on charges of practising magic simply because he had married a wealthy widow in a town where he was an outsider (Apul., *Apologia* 25–8, 42–7; see also Kolenkow 1976: 108–9; Remus 1983: 70; de Vos 1999b). Agrippina was accused of adultery and using magic by someone who, Tacitus suggests, was simply trying to make a name for himself (Tac., *Annals* 4.52). It is doubtful that these accusation can be attributed to 'misunderstanding'.

Furthermore, other religious groups were accused of cannibalism (Wagemakers 2010: 351–2). Many foreign nations were suspected of practices such as human sacrifice, cannibalism and incest – especially those on the fringes of the civilised (that is, the Graeco-Roman) world. For example, accusations of cannibalism and/or child sacrifice were levelled against most African tribes, some Egyptian tribes, some Gallic tribes (especially the Druids), Scythians, Carthaginians and the people of the Caucuses region.[21] Indeed, Aristotle claimed that 'there are many foreign races that tend toward murder and cannibalism' (*Politics* 8.3.4). Similarly, Pliny the Elder asserts that:

> [s]ome Scythian tribes, indeed most of them, feed on human flesh – a claim that may seem unbelievable if we do not consider that races of this ominous character have lived in the central part of the world, named Cyclopes and Laestrygones, and that until relatively recently the tribes just beyond the Alps routinely practised human sacrifice.
>
> (N.H. 7.9–10)

Accusations of incest were made against most devotees of eastern religions (Benko 1984: 22, 62). Christians also made these same accusations against heterodox groups in the second century, particularly Gnostics (Iren., *Adversus Haereses* 1.25; 2.31; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 7.32; Clement, *Str.* 3.2.10; see also De Ste. Croix 1963: 20–1; Frend 1967: 188; Benko 1984: 65–6, 71; MacDonald 1997: 59–64; Wagemakers 2010: 344–5).

There are also numerous examples of individuals or groups who were accused of practising magic.[22] Furthermore, ritual murder was also commonly associated with the practice of magic (Benko 1984: 60–1). In fact, accusations of magic and conspiracy were traditionally linked in Graeco-Roman thought with secret nocturnal rituals. Since the Christians practised the latter, it would simply have been assumed that they practised the former.[23]

Rather than attributing many of the popular Graeco-Roman accusations against Christians (such as incest, illicit sexual behaviour, cannibalism, human sacrifice and the practice of magic) to misunderstanding, they should be seen as the stereotypic charges levelled against those who were perceived to threaten society. In other words, they were used to label those perceived to be deviants (Salzman 2010: 189). Therefore, while those who claim that the accusations against the early Christians were based on misunderstanding and assumed that they were regarded as anti-social because they were thought to engage in such activity, it is more likely that because the Christians were regarded as anti-social it was assumed that they would engage in such activity. The popular perception of and accusations against Christians simply reflect the stereotypic way that Graeco-Roman society described those who were perceived to be 'outsiders' and threats to their society.[24] Overall, it seems quite clear that Christians were resented by ordinary Greeks and Romans because they were dangerously deviant.

Conclusion

On the whole, it would appear that ordinary Greeks and Romans disliked and resented Christians because of the threat that they posed to society. Christians rejected the traditional gods and cults (including the imperial cult), an action that was believed to harm people's very livelihoods and welfare. They split families and households, thereby damaging the fundamental building-block of

society. They were suspected (and accused) of engaging in magic and a range of illicit, immoral and criminal acts. Indeed, such anti-social attitudes and activities became synonymous with the very name of 'Christian'.

While scholars have attributed many of these accusations to misunderstanding, it is more likely that these were stereotypic accusations applied to those who were considered dangerous deviants. After all, these accusations were made over a long period of time – too long to be explained away as misunderstandings. Furthermore, similar accusations were also made against other individuals and groups who were perceived to be threats to Graeco-Roman society. When understood in terms of deviance labels, it is also clear that there need not have been any specific basis to these accusations, apart from the perception of anti-social behaviour on the part of ordinary Greeks and Romans who made them.

Notes

1 De Ste. Croix 1963: 6–7; Krodel 1971: 261; Lane Fox 1986: 423, 450; Garnsey and Saller 1987: 174; Barnes 1991: 236–7; Sordi 1994 [1988]: 194–5; Williams 1997: 896; Williams 2012: 282–5; Wypustek 1997: 276; Friesen 2001: 143–4; Clark 2004: 6; Blount 2009: 11; Koester 2009: 6; Salzman 2010: 186, 190.
2 Benko 1984: 7–8; Lane Fox 1986: 425; Johnson 1988: 417; Phillips 1991: 263–4; de Vos 1999b; Williams 2012: 284–5.
3 See Frend 1967: 156–7; Collins 1984: 98; Downing 1988: 115; Slater 1998: 245; see also Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.* 5.1.7; Athenagoras, *Leg. pro Christ.* 1.
4 See de Vos 1999a: 35–8; see also Wilken 1984: 63–5; Goppelt 1993: 39–40; Achtemeier 1996: 282–5; Kraybill 1996: 52; Slater 1998: 244, 250–1; Oakes 2001: 89–91; Blount 2009: 8–14; Carter 2009: 36–7, 44.
5 See Cuss 1974: 96–101; Price 1984: 252–65; Esler 1994: 132; Slater 1998: 253; Friesen 2001: 145–6; Blount 2009: 249; Cook 2011: 249.
6 See Cuss 1974: 77, 84; Collins 1984: 101; Price 1984: 78–9; Friesen 1995: 249–50; Achtemeier 1996: 285; Kraybill 1996: 29–34; Slater 1998: 238.
7 Thompson 1990: 161–2; Kraybill 1996: 29, 53; de Vos 1999a: 35–6.
8 Downing 1988: 115; Goppelt 1993: 39–41, 327; Achtemeier 1996: 28–9; Slater 1998: 243; Blount 2009: 71; Cook 2011: 223.
9 See De Ste. Croix 1963: 8; MacMullen 1992 [1966]: 142; Frend 1967: 124, 155; Krodel 1971: 259; Cuss 1974: 149; Barnes 1991: 231; Goppelt 1993: 43; Sordi 1994 [1988]: 31; Slater 1998: 247–8; Green 2010: 50–1; Williams 2012: 279–83.
10 See also De Ste. Croix 1964: 31; Frend 1967: 195; Krodel 1971: 259; Janssen 1979: 151–4; Benko 1980: 1090–1, 1984: 24, 60–70, 98; Cunningham 1982: 8; Lane Fox 1986: 427; Wagner 1994: 133; MacDonald 1997: 64–72; Reasoner 1997: 911; Wypustek 1997: 277; Clark 2004: 20; Wagemakers 2010: 337–8.
11 See also Frend 1979: 35; Benko 1984: 46; MacDonald 1997: 64; Clark 2004: 20.
12 See Aune 1980: 1545; Remus 1983: 60; Benko 1984: 113–19; Wypustek 1997: 282; de Vos 1999b; see also Tertullian, *Ad Uxorem* 2.5.
13 See also Frend 1967: 200; Janssen 1979: 151–4; Cunningham 1982: 8; Wagner 1994: 132; Wypustek 1997: 277; Clark 2004: 6–9.
14 So Frend 1967: 177, 198; Reasoner 1997: 912; Williams 1997: 897.
15 See also De Ste. Croix 1963: 10; Lane Fox 1986: 426; even Price 1984: 221.
16 Cuss 1974: 158; Friesen 1993: 154, 166; Bowersock 1995: 48; see also Price 1984: 73–83, 111–12, 123–4.
17 See also Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14.
18 Aune 1980: 1545; Remus 1983: 60; Benko 1984: 12, 24, 113–19; Wypustek 1997: 282.
19 Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 8.4–5; 9.4; see also Remus 1983: 60; Benko 1984: 10–12, 125–6.
20 See, for example, Malina and Neyrey 1991: 97–122; Barclay 1995: 114–27; de Vos 1999b; Still 1999: 94–104.
21 See Min. Fel., *Oct.* 30.3–4; Philostr. *Vit. Apoll.* 6.25; Herodotus, *Histories* 1.216; 3.38, 99; 4.26, 64, 106; Strabo, *Geog.* 15.1.56; and also Benko 1984: 17, 61–6; Collins 1984: 87; McGowan 1994: 425–6, 431.
22 For example, Tert., *De virginibus velandis* 15.1; *De spectaculis* 2.8; *De pudicitia* 5.11; Tacit., *Ann.* 2.69; Plut., *Conjug. praec.* 141B; *Dion.* 3.3; see also Aune 1980: 1523; Remus 1983: 52.
23 Min. Fel., *Oct.* 8.4–5; 9.4; Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96; Apul., *Met.* 9.14; see also Remus 1983: 60; Benko 1984: 10–12, 125–6.
24 See Wilken 1984: 31–2; McGowan 1994: 433–4; MacDonald 1997: 60; Slater 1998: 246.

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PART IX

Internal challenges

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41

INTERNAL RENEWAL AND DISSENT IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN WORLD

Sheila E. McGinn

Perhaps one of the most significant debates of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries among scholars of early Christianity is the extent to which it is appropriate to speak of 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy' before the Council of Nicea (325 CE). The rise of historical criticism and its application to the development of doctrine shattered scholars' former straightforward assumption of the canon of Vincent of Lerins—that orthodoxy is what was believed by everyone, everywhere, at every time. Before many had come to terms with the evidence calling this assumption into question, a second and more significant challenge was raised by the German scholar Walter Bauer. In his *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* (*Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, 1934), Bauer called into question even the more modest assumption retained by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars that orthodoxy was the common faith from which heretics then diverged. On the contrary, Bauer argued, heresy came first and then orthodoxy.

The working assumption of the priority of orthodoxy, however, was not easily unseated. Its durability is illustrated by the fact that it took an entire generation before Bauer's challenge really gained much attention. Not until the mid 1960s did Bauer's work reach international recognition with its second German edition (1964), and then its English translation (1971). Prior to this, most scholars seem to have ignored it in the hope that its challenge would go away.

Such a substantial critique of the former scholarly approach could not be brushed aside forever. With the rise of 'engaged' scholarship in the seventies (for example, in liberation theology and feminist hermeneutics), many began to press the question of what social, economic, and political factors may have influenced the doctrinal controversies of the first Christian centuries. Ecclesiastical decisions privileging certain doctrines over others were no longer viewed in a theological vacuum, but came to be seen in the context of wider social processes. All this transpired just as Bauer's work was finding a wider audience.

The title of this essay illustrates how far the pendulum has swung. Less than a generation ago, this section of a volume on the early Christian world would have been entitled 'Heresy and heresies.' Now the discussion is set in the framework of 'Internal renewal and dissent in the early Christian world.' Individual movements still are given their traditional names—Gnosticism, Montanism, Donatism, and Arianism—although without attempting to prejudge the question of their propriety, which currently itself is a matter of considerable debate, as the subsequent four essays in this volume will show. On the other hand, Darrell Bock recently argued (2006) against the notion that Gnostic

gospels represent an original Christianity that was later suppressed. The positive reception for this book suggests a continuing reticence on the part of many scholars when it comes to redefining early Christian 'boundaries'.

While 'renewal' (a revival of a previously accepted practice) is a less controversial subject, some scholars of early Christianity (traditionally known as 'patristics') bemoan the recent interest in 'heresy.' The scholarly shift away from privileging conciliar decisions and statements of the 'Fathers of the Church' is seen as bad enough, but at least it is understandable given the application of historical-critical methods to studies of this early literature. However, what has developed, they claim, is not an even-handed historical analysis, but rather the privileging of the heretics (e.g., Henry 1982: 124).

Given the significance of the present debate and the breadth of evidence being adduced, attempting to summarize the sea of current thinking feels somewhat like walking on water. Nevertheless, a few broad strokes can be drawn, as long as one remembers that such generalizations will always have their exceptions in specific cases.

Insiders and outsiders

'Heretics,' according to the traditional definition, are 'outsiders,' those who have gone beyond the boundaries of the true faith. The Vincentian canon stipulated that 'orthodoxy' is what has been believed in the church by everyone, in every place, throughout time. Thus, if one adheres to some other kind of belief, by definition that places the person 'outside' the church. According to this view, there can be no such thing as 'internal dissent' in doctrinal matters, since a belief contrary to the established or majority view defines a person as 'outside' the church. Even after the rise of modern historical methods and the advent of a critical approach to doctrinal developments, this canon remained unchallenged for quite some time. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Church historians often simply repeated the sentence of their uncritical forebears when it came to determining 'orthodoxy' of insiders and the 'heterodoxy' or 'heresy' of 'outsiders.'

One of the first signs that this uncritical dike was beginning to leak came in 1881 with G. Nathanael Bonwetsch's *Die Geschichte des Montanismus* (*The History of Montanism*). Bonwetsch noted a shift in scholarly assessment of whether Tertullian had been a heretic, and he attributed this shift as sparking a reassessment of whether the Montanist movement was heretical or not. The question itself attested to an increasing awareness that ancient authors labeled as 'heretical' both

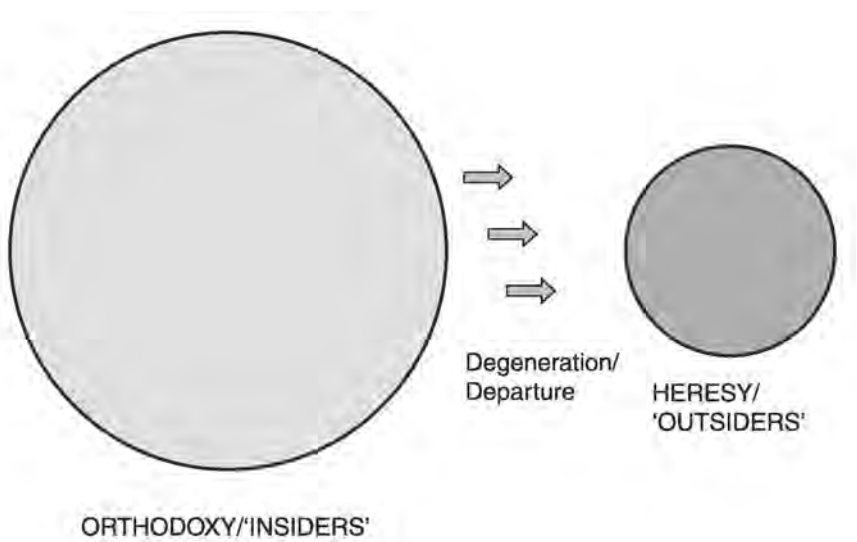

Figure 41.1 Orthodoxy and heresy in early Christianity as constituted by insiders and outsiders

movements that were doctrinally at variance with 'the great church' as well as ones that evidenced no such doctrinal variations, but rather showed variations in ecclesiastical practice or discipline. Hence, scholars began to distinguish between 'heresy' as divergences from the belief system of 'the great church' and 'schism' as divergences in practice or discipline. Of course, at the same time, although they were often not cognizant of the significance of this language shift, they began to develop a new mapping of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in the history of early Christianity. And with this boundary shift began a new paradigm shift in the historical approach to opposing views in early Christianity.

The recognition of 'schism' as a distinct category from 'heresy' blurred the once clear boundary between 'insiders' and 'outsiders.' In the past, it was assumed that all those who were 'insiders' must have believed the same doctrines, worshiped in the same ways, followed the same disciplinary practices, and accepted the same leadership models. Any recognizable variation on these points was taken as a sign of being an 'outsider' to the great church—a heretic. Now it was argued that doctrine alone provided the dividing line between the 'insiders' versus the 'outsiders.' One potentially could find a set of believers who engaged in different rituals, followed different disciplinary practices and also lived under a totally different ecclesiastical leadership structure than the great church, and yet evaluate them as 'insiders'—as long as there was no evidence of doctrinal disagreement. Thus was born the notion of internal 'dissent' or renewal as an historical reality for early Christianity.

It is perhaps not coincidental that this paradigm shift in evaluating early Christianity occurred toward the middle of the twentieth century, when there was a concomitant shift taking place in the relationships among major Christian denominations. The rise of the 'ecumenical' movement and of 'interfaith' dialogue among Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans, and Lutherans, among others, shows the fruits of the *ressourcement* movement, where historians took a fresh look at Christian origins and what light the historical sources from the formative period might be able to provide for the life of the contemporary church. The pastoral effect of the historians' paradigm shift was the eventual recognition among different Christian groups that this is precisely what they were—different groups within Christianity, rather than one Christian Church assailed by many heretical groups.

The post-war period also evidenced a growing awareness of the social and political uses (and abuses) of religion. The manipulation of the German ecclesiastical structure by the Nazi powers was lamented as one of the more serious causes of the Holocaust. The devastating, immoral, social, and political effects of the branding of one group as 'heretics' and 'outsiders' could no longer be ignored. This gave church historians an added impetus to seek out the origins of such labels, as well as their social and political uses, and reassess their validity.

Early Christian trajectories

A watershed of this new discussion was the 1971 work of James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester, *Trajectories Through Early Christianity*, where they laid out the evidence for early Christianity being a multiform reality, with differing characteristics dependent upon the geographical, social, and cultural location in which it was found. At almost the same time, Robert Wilken directly confronted the Vincentian canon in *The Myth of Christian Beginnings* (1971). These studies were followed almost immediately by a wave of discussions of diversity in the early church, and even in the New Testament itself, as in James Dunn's 1977 work, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*. Koester furthered the argument for the diversity of the early Christian movement in his two-volume New Testament introduction (1982), breaking one further barrier by including apocryphal writings contemporaneous to the New Testament materials. Within two decades, what was taken for granted in discussions of the New Testament texts was no longer their consistency, but rather their variety; the unity of their thought was what required an argument (see Reumann 1991 and Achtemeier 1987).

Perhaps the most significant feature thereby raised in the 'orthodoxy v. heresy' discussions in the last quarter of the twentieth century has been the oft-repeated question of 'by whom are they considered heretics?' None of the extant literature of early Christianity claims the title heretic for its author;

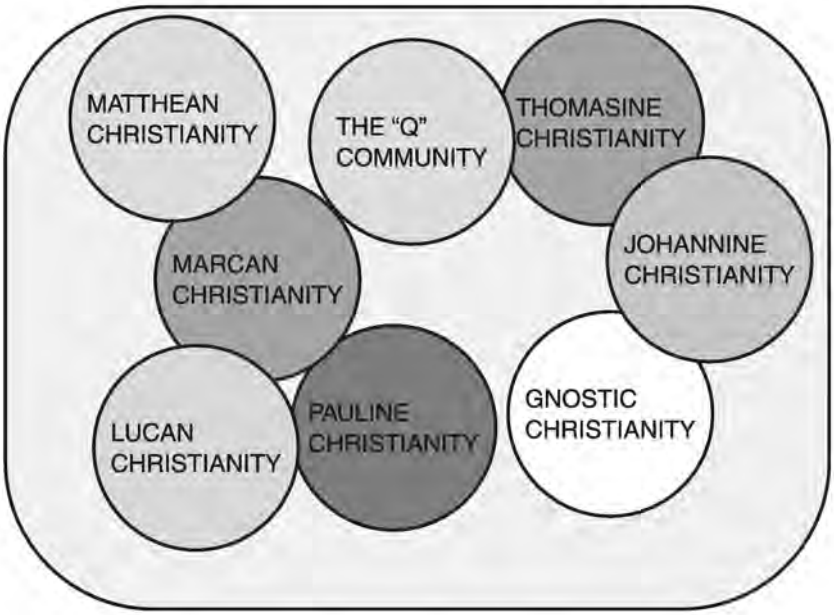

Figure 41.2 Christianities in the New Testament and related literature

on the contrary, each author views her/himself as teaching true doctrine. If a 'false doctrine, is in view, it is that taught by others who are stigmatized as 'outsiders' to the teacher's group. The dynamic of 'insiders' (those who know the truth) versus 'outsiders' (those who teach and believe falsely) has been previously noted. These categories remained unquestioned before the late nineteenth century. Even when the categories began to be challenged, the 'insider' v. 'outsider' distinction remained inviolate; for decades afterwards, it was still taken by most scholars as descriptive of the historical situation rather than being viewed as prescriptive for the ancient audience. But eventually the sociological and political dimensions of this language were noticed, and scholars began to undertake a serious analysis of its significance.

The new 'theologies of liberation' both arose out of and expanded upon this social and political analysis. Sociologist George Zito summarizes the common view of liberation theologians, as well as of many contemporary historians of early Christianity, when he explains that the heretical status of an articulated opinion is determined by an institutional process of legitimation by the discourse within which a heresy is voiced (1983). 'Heresy' is a thought-world that threatens established power relations, whether ecclesiastical or political. In short, scholars must recognize that speech is contextual and perspectival; whether overtly or covertly, it both expresses and reinforces group boundaries. One can no longer speak simply of orthodoxy and heresy without defining *whose* orthodoxy or *whose* heresy. And the determination of which view will become orthodoxy is not only a theological process, but a social and political one as well.

Framing the discussion of theological trends or movements within early Christianity as a question of 'internal renewal and dissent'—rather than of 'orthodoxy versus heresy'—presumes this paradigm shift from the notion of a universal Christianity with uniformity of belief and practice to that of an ecumenical Christianity with some consistent patterns as well as distinctive features in every place where it was found. The boundaries between 'insider' and 'outsider' become very hazy indeed. If we suspect as prescriptive, rather than descriptive, the statements of ancient authors who charge another group with 'heresy,' then the only boundary guidelines that remain are those that are self-selected by the groups themselves. This shift of the burden of proof is one of the developments that troubles scholars such as Henry (1982). And unsettling it well may be, for it certainly has complicated the

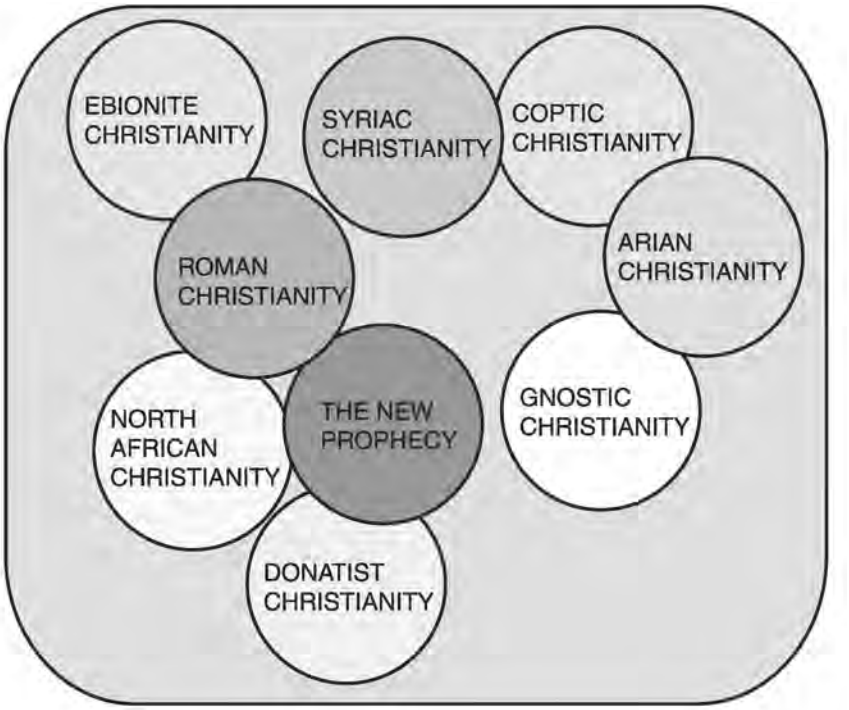

Figure 41.3 Christianities in the first four Roman centuries

issues. It has broadened the scope of early Christianity so much that most scholars today speak of 'early Christianities' rather than referring to a singular, univocal description of the movement.

In this context, the notion of 'internal renewal and dissent' comes to have two meanings. In the broadest sense, it simply refers to the pluralism that we find among these different trajectories of early Christianity due to their varied geographical, social, and cultural contexts—whether or not there actually seems to have been any overt historical conflict over these different developments of the Christian movement. In the second place, it refers to the actual differences of opinion that did indeed arise among various sectors of Christianity in its formative period.

Re-visioning the past

While the terms 'renewal' and 'dissent' may imply a prior standard to which one wants to return or from which one wishes to diverge, they need not be read that way. On the contrary, the scholarly consensus at this point seems to be that variety preceded the development of a universal standard among the early churches. Taking into account the gradual development of agreement on issues of doctrine and practice, what appears in retrospect as 'dissent' originated as one option among many, each of which over time rose or fell in popularity and persuasiveness. Only after one of these alternatives becomes the dominant view can we see the other alternatives as 'dissenting' (see Bauer 1972). Similarly, what in retrospect appears as an 'internal renewal' movement (e.g., the New Prophecy or 'Montanism') may well have begun as one viable option maintained by one group within the many churches, or dominant in one particular geographical region, and then later to have spread to other sectors of the church. Each case must be decided on its own grounds.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to four examples of how such alternative approaches might change the way we envision the earliest history of Christianity. To attain a sense of how powerful

this paradigm shift might be, I have taken examples from across the spectrum of the early Christian movement: a case of orthodoxy, a case of heresy, a case of schism and a true 'outsider' group.

The first example is from an 'orthodox' movement and leader, to see how our picture of orthodoxy changes if we re-contextualize this particular trajectory within it. Paul of Tarsus and Pauline Christianity (considered in detail in Chapter 7 of this volume) provide a perfect case study, because Paul's teaching often is seen as the hallmark of orthodoxy; indeed, Paul sometimes has been considered 'the founder of Christianity' itself. If Paulinism is viewed as one of the many choices in first-century Christianity, how does this change our understanding of Paul's teaching and practice? What if Paulinism is no longer the hallmark of the 'insider' but rather a version of Christianity that may have been 'outside' the mainstream?

The second example is Gnosticism (see Chapter 42 of this volume), a movement traditionally understood as a heresy. But what would we find if we tried to understand Gnosticism as simply one of the many alternatives available during the formative period of Christianity? What would the Christians labeled as Gnostics tell us about Christian faith and life if we viewed them as Christians rather than as 'Gnostics?'

Next, we will turn to Montanism (see Chapter 43 of this volume), a late second-century prophetic movement which its earliest opponents labeled a heresy, but which since has been understood as a schism. What difference does it make if we construe Montanism as a renewal movement *within* early Christianity, rather than a movement *breaking away from* early Christianity? Renewal means a revival of some lost practice and/or belief from the past. If Montanism really was a renewal movement, what was it that the Montanists saw being lost to early Christianity that needed to be recovered? Finally, Manichaeism represents the example of a true 'outsider' group, a distinctive religion in its own right, which provides competition for Christianity in the third century and beyond.

Paul of Tarsus, the first dissident

Antique historians and heresiologists (e.g., Irenaeus of Lyons, Eusebius of Caesarea) viewed Simon Magus as 'the first author of all heresy' (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2.13.5; cf. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 1.23.1) but Gerd Lüdemann (1996) was among the first to challenge this view. Following up on a comment of Walter Bauer (1971: 236, n.83), Lüdemann named Paul of Tarsus as 'The only heretic of the earliest period' (1996: 61). What he meant to emphasize, of course, is that the notion of 'heresy' is perspectival and contextual. Furthermore, given Paul's context in the first decades of

Figure 41.4 Paul, from a fourth-century fresco in a cave in Ephesus; Photo Sheila McGinn

the Christian movement, his views were divergent from the 'mainstream' understanding of what it meant to be a follower of the Messiah Jesus—assuming that one defines the 'mainstream' from the viewpoint of the mother church of Christianity, the Jerusalem church.

Although we may demur from his label for Paul, Lüdemann's basic point is well taken. If we take into account the New Testament materials that pertain to Paul and his teachings, including Paul's own letters, it becomes clear that Paul is arguing for an alternative understanding of Christianity from what was dominant in the Jerusalem church of the 40s and 50s, and probably also in Rome as well. According to both Acts 15 and Galatians 2, the 'Council of Jerusalem' was convened at least in part to adjudicate between these two divergent presentations of the gospel. Acts 15:2 mentions that the reason for the meeting is 'dissension' between Paul and others. (Luke uses the term *stasis*, which can even mean 'revolt.') Clearly Paul believes that some Christians from Jerusalem are behind the 'Judaizing' troubles in Galatia, and he goes to great lengths to refute their position. In Galatians 2:11–14, Paul even mentions a later public confrontation with Peter in Antioch about the proper behavior in fellowship meetings, possibly indicating deep division between Paul on the one hand and Peter and James on the other (Esler 1998: 126–40). Whether Paul was successful among the Galatians, we do not know; but he seems never to have returned to Antioch after this incident with Peter, which suggests that Paul's view was not the winner in Syria. Neither does his apparent foreboding about his return to Jerusalem (in Rom. 15:30–32) bespeak a victory there.

We are left with a picture not of Paul as a spokesperson for the 'orthodox' or 'mainstream' view, but rather a marginalized Paul dissenting from the prevailing view, working from within—or perhaps along the fringes—for reform of an apparently well-established practice of having two ranks of converts, the first for men of Jewish origin and the second for women and Gentile men. This dissident Paul is castigated by many of his contemporaries for teaching an inadequate gospel and is even rejected for engaging in practices that are called idolatrous (e.g., Rev 2:14, 20; cf. 1 Corinthians 8)!

One hundred years later, this picture is dramatically changed (see, e.g., Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 19; 43; Tertullian, *On Baptism* 12:1; cf. Col 2:11–12). The gospel message was winning many more adherents among the Gentiles than the Jews, especially in regions like Roman Asia Minor and Egypt. No longer the minority voice, Paul's view on church practice has become the dominant one and the Jewish-Christian view has become the one marginalized. To achieve membership in the Christian movement, one must accept the faith of Christ and receive baptism; circumcision is no longer an issue. The question of male-female relations in the church is not so easily resolved, but Paul's argument for equal treatment of Jews and Gentile converts in the church has won the day. In fact, it is nearly a moot point given that the overwhelming majority of new Christians come from Gentile origins. Eventually, the hard-liners who want to retain a more Jewish identity as Christians, rather than labeling Paul, are themselves the ones who are labeled, and these 'Ebionites' gradually fade out of our historical picture.

Which is it to be, Paul as 'apostle to the Gentiles' or 'first among the heretics'? Was Paul of Tarsus an 'insider' or an 'outsider'? If we follow this new paradigm, then the answer must be 'both.' This is no mere equivocation, but rather a judgement imposed on us by the facts of the case. How we will use Paul's teachings in our time is a decision open to Christians of all stripes—laity, clerics, and theologians—but how to evaluate Paul in his own time is a historical judgement that must be faithful to the historical data. And, as discomfiting as it may be to us, the data do not agree. To many of his contemporaries, Paul was a dissident and troublemaker. Later believers saw him rather as a great teacher and visionary. They can both be 'right.' John Barclay (1995) has argued for the need to take the perspective of the observer into account in assessing how Paul (and other ancient Jews of questionable status) were regarded by their contemporaries.

For the most part, Paul's proponents were looking at the same features of Paul's theology as his detractors (e.g., the relationship between Torah and gospel; the circumcision question), but they evaluated these features differently because they came from different social and cultural contexts and, hence, were interested in fostering different social relations. Uncovering the context of their evaluations has

provided greater depth and breadth to the historical understanding of early Christianity. This same kind of 'contextualizing' approach also is underway in the study of such movements as Gnosticism, Montanism, Donatism, and Arianism—movements that once were known as 'heresies.' If the first dissident, Paul, can become a valuable resource for later believers, perhaps we may yet glean at least some small insights from these other dissenting groups as well. And we certainly can discover why these groups, who viewed themselves as Christians, believed that their particular understanding of Christianity was preferable to the other options of the time.

What was it that the Gnostics knew?

One of the earliest attempts to read dissenting voices from their own point of view was Elaine Pagels' study of the Gnostics.[1] Most well known for her study, *The Gnostic Gospels* (1982), she already had published two earlier studies of Gnostic exegesis of New Testament materials (1973, 1975). In *The Gnostic Gospels*, Pagels begins with the assertion that, in addition to its religious or theological content, 'the doctrine of bodily resurrection also serves an essential *political* function: it legitimizes the authority of certain men who claim to exercise exclusive leadership over the churches as the successors of the apostle Peter' (Pagels 1982: 38; original emphasis). This is not because the resurrection *per se* supports a particular leadership structure, but because the canonical traditions show the resurrection message being validated by the witness of particular leading men (e.g., 1 Corinthians 15:3–8; Acts 1:21–22). The Gnostic gospels, on the other hand, promote a spiritualized understanding of Christ's resurrection that involves a 'direct, personal contact with the "living One" . . . [which] offers the ultimate criterion of truth, taking precedence over all second-hand testimony and all tradition' (Pagels 1982: 53). This notion of the resurrection, in giving pride of place to direct experience, thereby undercuts any possibility of developing an institutional structure of authority. The 'orthodox' view, on the other hand, centers on the validity of a *past* historical experience granted to certain of Jesus' earliest disciples; this necessarily makes those disciples and their experience an external criterion of truth, and thereby provides a solid ground on which to establish an institutional authority structure.

This notion that there are socio-political dynamics involved in 'heresy-making' has by now become commonplace in early Christian studies. This does not mean, however, that the *only* dynamics involved in these early Christian debates were social and or political in nature. Pagels, for example, certainly overstated the case in attributing exclusively political motives to the proponents of the 'bodily resurrection' view versus the Gnostics. Her assumption that the claim of bodily resurrection necessarily supports an androcentric, patriarchal church structure cannot be supported in the face of the resurrection stories in the canonical gospels, all of which have women witnesses. Furthermore, the original ending of Mark's Gospel (16:1–8a) reports the empty tomb, which presumably indicates a belief in the bodily resurrection of Christ, yet the only witnesses are said to have 'said nothing to anyone' (16:8) and no post-resurrection appearances of Jesus are reported. Hence, it seems possible to hold to the 'orthodox' view of bodily resurrection without the political motives Pagels outlines. Still, if somewhat reductionistic in her conclusions, nevertheless Pagels' point is well taken that more than theology was at stake in these debates. Religions are human social organizations and, as such, they include human structures of power that are legitimated by the religious ideology. Scholars now recognize that early Christianity is not an exception but rather a clear example of this rule.

So, what did the Gnostics know? First of all, they recognized that repeating stories of post-resurrection appearances of Jesus to certain individuals made those few individuals privileged witnesses to the resurrection event. Hence, telling such stories would be a means to proclaim the resurrection while also proclaiming the authority of those witnesses. Second, it seems reasonable to infer that the Gnostics recognized such a privileged status would generalize beyond authority concerning this one event to authority for interpreting the entire body of Jesus' teaching; no one else could experience the resurrected Lord the way these witnesses did, thus no one else could understand or teach the Lord's message as thoroughly as they did. Did they also envision

that, third, this generalized authority would lead to a permanent, hierarchical rank for those witnesses—and, fourth, a similar authority for their 'successors' as well? This is less certain, although also possible—and they would have been right on all four points (see, e.g., Acts 2).

The Gnostics provided the following alternative to this scenario: (1) individuals become witnesses to the resurrection by means of a direct encounter with the Risen One; (2) thereby they become reliable witnesses both to the resurrection and to the entire body of Jesus' teaching; (3) although Pagels seems not to think so, it is possible that some individuals might even be granted a rank above others in the Gnostic church, due to the depth of their spiritual experience, their teaching ability, or some other distinguishing feature (cf. the importance of demonstrating charismatic gifts in 1 Corinthians 12–14). However, stage four in the preceding scenario could never take place; no one could 'succeed' someone in such an office, precisely because the office was based upon a direct experience of the foundational event of Christianity—the resurrection of the Lord. Each leader must begin with step one. And the leadership rank would not mean the same thing in the Gnostic church, for any member could become a leader; they all could expect to experience the resurrection in a direct and immediate way, regardless of teacher or training.

As with Paul, there are lessons to be learned from the Gnostics. The following are four that in fact have been taken up by different trajectories within Christianity, perhaps most noticeably since the Reformation period. First, the most powerful and compelling religious experience is 'unmediated'; it is an experience that believers have for themselves, rather than one that is reported to them. Second, for authenticity as a religious leader, it is necessary to have had this kind of compelling, first-hand experience. For example, to speak with authority as a leader of a Christian community, one must have had a personal experience of the Risen One. Third, hierarchical leadership is one model, but not the only model of leadership. Finally, leadership need not be limited on the basis of sex or other physical traits.

What did the New Prophecy reclaim?

The New Prophecy of Asia Minor (called 'Montanism' by its opponents—see Chapter 43 in this volume) was one example of a Christian movement that seems to have taken hold of these four lessons from Gnosticism, but without adopting the Gnostic context for them. Montanism appears on the scene in Asia Minor sometime during the third quarter of the second century. The movement originated in Phrygia, a region in the southwestern portion of the Roman province of Asia.[2] Three initial leaders are known by name: Maximilla, Montanus, and Priscilla. All three were prophets who seem to have had ecstatic experiences during worship, and who also gave prophetic speeches in discursive language. Several of their oracles survive, but none in their original context. A few are recorded by Tertullian of North Africa, but most appear only as fragments reported by anti-Montanist writers in order to refute them.

Montanism arose as a 'renewal movement' within the church to combat at least some of the teachings of Gnosticism. Over against a denial of the full humanity of Christ and of the historical reality of the resurrection, the surviving oracles proclaim the reality of Christ's incarnation and affirm a Trinitarian view of the Godhead (McGinn-Moorer 1989: 312–4). They insist on the salvation of 'the little ones' (not just a 'Gnostic' elect), the importance of moral discipline in the Christian life, and the value of martyrdom as a share in the power of Christ. Both of these latter were viewed by libertarian Gnostics as pointless acts, since they had to do with the flesh rather than the spirit.

The New Prophecy often was linked by its opponents with Gnosticism, however, because of the prophetic and gender-inclusive leadership patterns noted above. Also, like the Gnostics, the leaders of the New Prophecy cherished 'unmediated' religious experience, for their leadership roles were based upon their prophetic gifts. Most scholars of Montanism view their leadership structure as more egalitarian than hierarchical, particularly given that leaders were selected based upon a charismatic gift. Their leadership consisted in the ability to share that gift of prophecy with the Montanist

Figure 41.5 Rock-cut Byzantine monastery near Pepouza which may be the site of an ancient Montanist enclave; Photo Peter Lampe and Bill Tabbernee; for an enlarged view, see Figure 43.4, this volume

community, not on any kind of inherited rank. Two of the three prophets were women, which illustrates that sex was not a criterion for selection of Montanist leaders. Neither do other inherent physical traits appear to have been used as selection criteria. We do find that Maximilla and Priscilla separated from their husbands, presumably to lead a celibate lifestyle, but this is a status choice rather than an inherent physical characteristic.

The New Prophecy looks like a 'renewal movement' in its lively worship, and especially in its focus on the continuing revelation of God through prophetic speech and visions, precisely because this is not an innovation but a return to (or continuation of) an earlier tradition. Many first- and second-century Christian texts speak of prophets, prophecy, preachers speaking under the influence of the Spirit of God, worship in the Spirit, and similar themes (see 1 Corinthians 11–14; Acts 2, 4, 9, etc.; *Didache* 10.7; 11.7). Clement of Rome (fl. 92–101) insists that his letter to Corinth is prompted by the Holy Spirit (*First Epistle to the Corinthians* 63.2); in the opening greeting of each of his letters, Ignatius of Antioch (35?–107) claims the title 'Theophorus'—God-bearer—because of his prophetic gifts (cf. his *Epistle to the Philadelphians* 7.2), and he encourages Polycarp of Smyrna (*c.* 70–156) to seek spiritual revelations (*Epistle to Polycarp* 2.2); the martyrs were known to have visions and revelations of Christ in their last hours (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 2.2; 9.1), and even crowds of on-lookers were said to see miraculous visions (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 15.1–2). The *Shepherd of Hermas* is even a full-blown second-century apocalypse, including visions and revelations. In such a context, the prophetic activity found in Montanism can certainly be no novelty. However, it can be a revival of prophecy and other manifestations of the Spirit in the face of a rising emphasis on an authoritative teaching tradition that is 'handed down' by word-of-mouth.

The New Prophecy may have been a threat to the 'orthodox' church not because of its novelty but precisely because it maintained or revived an older, prophetic tradition rather than giving way

to the new hierarchical tradition of authoritative teachers. Montanist insistence on prophecy posed a similar threat as did Gnosticism because of its understanding of leadership as arising out of a specific and immediate religious experience—in this case, the experience of prophetic revelation. The charismatic nature of this experience did not lend itself to the kind of control which was sought by those who claimed the name 'orthodox.' Direct and new revelation could threaten the existing beliefs of the church, and certainly could not be controlled by human agents in the same way that a teaching tradition could be. In addition, the Montanists permitted women to lead prayer and worship, whereas the orthodox increasingly wanted to restrict these roles to influential men.

'Thus I refute the Manichees!'[3]

Manichæism arose during the mid third century CE in Sassanid Persia (see Chapter 46 of this work). Founded by the prophet Mani (*c.* 216–276 CE), the doctrine of the sect drew from various religious sources in the east, including Zoroastrianism, Gnosticism, and the Elkasaite sect of Christianity, in which Mani himself was raised. Mani seems to have viewed himself as the fulfillment of the Johannine promise of 'another Paraclete' (John 14:16) and his revelation as the ultimate religion, which encompassed and completed all the preceding revelations from Jesus, the Buddha, and Zoroaster. Thus, Manichæism likely represents the first syncretistic universalist religion in human history.

Like Zoroastrianism before it, Manichæism addressed the theodicy question basic to monotheistic religions by adopting a dualistic worldview. Monotheistic religions envision one good, just, and all-powerful deity. However, this construction of the divine reality tends to shipwreck on the problem of Evil: if God is all-powerful, good, and just, then why do the good suffer and the evil prosper? Is God incapable of eliminating evil? Then God is not all-powerful. If God has the power but permits evil to flourish, then God is not all-good or just. Religious dualism, on the other hand, resolves this conundrum by positing two divine principles, one good and one evil.

The good God (the 'Father of Greatness'), in Mani's understanding, is not all-powerful, but rather is engaged in an ongoing conflict with primal evil ('the King of Darkness'). This conflict plays out in the heavenly realm as well as on earth, which is why even good people experience evil. Such a dualist system provides a logical (if not very comforting) solution to the theodicy problem endemic to traditional monotheistic systems.

Such dualism on the divine level correlates to an ontological dualism whereby spiritual reality is viewed as good and material reality is viewed as evil. (As is common in dualistic systems, this dualism also is gendered, with the 'spiritual' realm viewed as masculine and the 'material' realm as 'feminine.') The material world comes about not as an act of free creation on the part of the one good God (as, for example, in Judaism) but rather as 'fallout' from the conflict between the two divine principles. That conflict continues to perdure in both the human and divine realms. The struggle between Good and Evil in the human realm reflects the same type of ongoing battle on the divine level.

Because material reality comprises the fallout from the conflict between Good and Evil, material objects are composed of 'evil' matter, but a spark of the Divine Good remains trapped within those material objects. The object of Manichæism is to liberate oneself from the grasp of materiality, and also to help liberate these divine sparks that are trapped in non-sentient material objects. All of life thereby becomes imbued with this divine task, so that even eating serves to liberate the divine sparks trapped in the fruits and vegetables consumed by the Manichæan elect. Eventually, the forces of good will be able to overthrow the forces of evil, but meanwhile the struggle rages on.

Manichæism spread to both east and west over the fourth through seventh centuries. In the west, it traversed the Roman empire and went so far as Spain, Dalmatia, and France; the medieval Cathars and Albigensians were the spiritual descendents of Manichæism. In the east, it became popular as far as China, where it lasted at least into the fourteenth century.[4]

Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE), the most famous of erstwhile Manichees, initially was attracted by their rigorous lifestyle of abstinence and their philosophical interpretations of scriptural texts,

especially those pertaining to cosmology. Eventually, however, he became disenchanted with many aspects of Manichæism, including their neglect of scientific evidence when it disagreed with their cosmology and their identification of the God of the Old Testament with the Evil Deity.[5]

Manichæism was never a Christian 'heresy' or even a dissenting movement; it began as and remained an independent, competing religious movement. Manichæism prompted Christians to reaffirm the goodness of the created realm, including human sexuality, and the dogma of the incarnation of the Divine Word in the fully human person of Jesus Christ. This notion of the Divine assuming 'fleshly' existence, abominable to Manichees and Gnostics alike, provided the Christian foundation for affirmation of the goodness of all creation and the value of the human body in the economy of salvation. It eventually provides the grounding for the entire sacramental system of Catholic Christianity, and the creation-centered spirituality of such figures as Francis of Assisi as well as contemporary eco-spirituality.

Something old, something new, something borrowed: which is true?

As can be seen from the preceding examples, the paradigm shift represented by this discussion of 'internal renewal and dissent' will have a profound impact on how we understand the development of 'the early Christian world.' Particularly in regard to doctrinal and institutional developments, the most significant difference which results from this change in assumptions—i.e., that there were a variety of early Christian models from the very beginning, rather than one, static reality—is that early Christians become much less alien than we thought. The history of early Christianity is a history of choices amid pluralism, not of a *deus ex machina* and an unthinking mob response. Some of these choices were later evaluated as orthodoxy, some as heresy, some as schism and some as another religion altogether. But such evaluative hindsight does not mean that any Christian *chose* heresy or schism. As today, believers followed their best lights, disagreed on significant issues, argued about them, and sometimes castigated, stereotyped, and marginalized those who disagreed with them. It remains important to learn what these early Christian groups borrowed from outsiders, revived from older traditions, or generated anew in light of their changing circumstances. Yet perhaps the most important thing we gain from this paradigm shift is that we now can learn how these diverse early Christian groups negotiated their differences, and what criteria they used to determine which of their old, new, and borrowed traditions would be retained for posterity. Whether we agree or disagree with their selections, whether we judge their decisions ultimately to be 'heresy' or 'orthodoxy,' understanding the decision-making process is at least as important as recognizing its outcome.

Whether or not we know this history, contemporary Christians are not merely repeating but also continuing this process of negotiating difference. We can do so blindly, or we can do it intentionally, with openness to the lessons of these early Christian 'dissenters' and innovators. Perhaps we can arrive not at the divisive judgements of 'heresy' or 'orthodoxy,' but rather at a unity of purpose and understanding that might have been—and still might be.

Notes

1 The term 'Gnosticism' derives from the Greek word, *gnosis* (knowledge), and refers to a religious-philosophical movement of pre-Christian origins that influenced formative Judaism and early Christianity in the first two centuries CE. While there appear to have been several strands of Gnosticism with somewhat divergent cosmologies and theologies, generally speaking the movement was marked by a radically dualistic worldview, with material reality classified as evil and spiritual reality as good. The Gnostic ideal was to gain spiritual enlightenment and escape from the evils of material existence.

2 Through the collaborative efforts of several scholars, the site of the Montanist Pepouza may have recently been discovered: see Tabbernee and Lampe 2008.

3 A popular story of Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274 CE) has him seated with guests at a banquet hosted by King Louis IX of France and interrupting the amiable conversation by slamming his fist on the table shouting, 'thus I refute the Manichees!' Apparently, the table conversation was not as interesting to Thomas as the centuries-old library debate about this eastern alternative to Christianity.
4 See Chapter 11, Herbert Christian Merillat, *The Gnostic Apostle Thomas: 'Twin' of Jesus* (1997), gnosis.org/thomasbook/ch11.html, hosted at the The Gnostic Society Library.
5 Ibid.

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42
GNOSTICISM

Alastair H. B. Logan

Introduction

The early meanings of 'Gnosticism'

'Gnosticism' is the modern designation, coined by the English divine, Henry More (1614–87), for a religious movement or movements of late antiquity which claimed to possess a specific and superior type of knowledge, *gnosis*. This knowledge was of their origin in a heavenly world and fall into this lower world of evil, error and illusion, the handiwork of subordinate heavenly beings, and their awakening and return to that transcendent world through a saving call issued by a heavenly revealer. Knowledge is thus essentially saving knowledge, salvation is through self-acquaintance, and this knowledge tends to be reserved for an élite. Proponents of such a view seem first to have been identified and attacked by Christian writers of the middle to late second century, such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus of Lyons, as representing a form of Christian 'heresy' deriving from Simon Magus (Acts 8:9–24), although, as we shall see, there existed contemporary pagan forms of such *gnosis*, e.g. the *Poimandres* of the Corpus Hermeticum, and what has been argued to be evidence of pre-Christian, Jewish forms of it. However, we do also have evidence from pagan Platonists attacking such Christian movements in the late second and mid third centuries, such as Celsus, Plotinus and Porphyry.

Justin Martyr seems to have been the first Christian author to write a treatise against all heresies (*Apology* 1.26.5), and the parallel he draws between heresies and the philosophical schools named after their founders, with their successions of teachers and pupils, developing novel lines of interpretation and thus increasingly disagreeing among themselves and departing further from the truth, seems to have profoundly influenced all later heresiology. Thus, echoing Justin, the major heresiologists, Irenaeus in his *Adversus haereses* of around 185, Pseudo-Hippolytus of Rome in his *Refutation of All Heresies* of the second decade of the third century, Hippolytus (–235), in his lost *Syntagma* against thirty-two heresies,[1] and Epiphanius of Salamis in his *Panarion* against eighty heresies of 375–7, reflect an increasingly stereotyped catalogue of Jewish and Christian heresies which includes groups called 'Gnostics', seeing them as inspired by the Devil and Greek philosophy.

Now Justin himself does not mention a sect which called itself or was called 'Gnostic', but simply refers to groups who claimed to be Christians, but who were in fact heretics, followers of and named after Simon Magus, his pupil Menander and Marcion, or who were called Marcionites, Valentinians, Basilidians and Saturnilians, etc. like the philosophical schools of Platonists, Stoics, Peripatetics and Pythagoreans (*Apol*. 1.26; *Dialogue with Trypho* 35, 80). It is Irenaeus writing his five books of detection

and refutation (*Adversus haereses*) of the 'falsely so-called *gnosis*' (cf. 1 Tim. 6:20) in the 180s who seems to identify groups who called themselves 'Gnostics/*gnostikoi*' in his additions to the heretical catalogue in Book 1 (chs 23–31) whose kernel ultimately derives from Justin. Thus at the end of Book 1, he deals at some length, apparently on the basis of written texts, with two mythological systems of a 'mass of Gnostics' (*multitudo Gnosticorum*) who he claims have arisen from the Simonians.

The first group are usually known as 'Barbelognostics', a secondary designation evidently derived from the name of the supreme female aeon of the myth, and the second as 'Ophites', again a later appellation derived from the prominence of the snake in their system, but Irenaeus plainly considers both to belong to the collective '*Gnostikoi*', from whom he claims his chief targets, the Valentinians, derive (*Adv. haer.* 1.30.15; 2 Praef.). Indeed his polemic against 'the falsely so-called *gnosis*' is directed against those who distinguish the supreme God and father of Christ from the Creator God of the Old Testament, the heavenly Christ from Jesus (or at least teach a docetic Christology), and claim only a part of us is saved (soul or spirit), denying the resurrection of the body, whom he repeatedly identifies as Valentinians, Basilidians, Gnostics and Marcionites. His somewhat loose use of the term 'Gnostic' has been the object of vigorous debate; does it apply to an actual group or is it just a general term for all the heretics of his catalogue as descendants of Simon Magus (Logan 1996, Chapter 1; Brakke 2010: 29–35)? I have argued that Irenaeus does have a particular group in mind, whose myth and initiation ritual profoundly influenced the Valentinians, and who are also represented by the Naassenes (from the Hebrew for snake) of Pseudo-Hippolytus, who called themselves '*Gnostikoi*' (*Refutation* 5.6.4), by the Christian sectarians of Celsus whom he calls '*Gnostikoi*' (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 5.61; 6.28–41) and whom Origen dubs 'Ophians', and the Christian 'heretics' whom Porphyry calls '*Gnostikoi*' who attended Plotinus' philosophy seminars in Rome in the 260s (*Ennead* 2.9.2) (Logan 2006, Chapter 2).

However, the problem is that such 'Gnostics' seem to disappear in the later heresiologists such as Epiphanius, among whom the sects who seem to correspond most closely to Irenaeus' 'Gnostics' are called by different names ('Sethians' and 'Archontics'), while the so-called 'Gnostics' apparently represent a licentious branch of a predominantly ascetic movement (Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 16). Furthermore, although Clement of Alexandria in the early third century can appeal to the ideal of the true Christian Gnostic,[2] and preserve valuable fragments of Basilides and Valentinus, he makes only fleeting references to the false, heretical *gnosis*, which he attributes to a certain Prodicus.[3] Conversely, it is Clement who preserves in a collection of fragments attributed to Theodotus, a disciple of Valentinus, a famous formula which many take as the key to Gnosticism and which would confirm Irenaeus' portrayal of Valentinians as representatives of the falsely so-called *gnosis*:

> Until baptism, they say, Fate is effective, but after it the astrologers
> no longer speak the truth. It is not the bath alone that makes us free,
> but also the knowledge (*gnosis*): who were we? What have we become?
> Where were we? Into what places have we been cast? Whither are we
> hastening? From what are we delivered? What is birth? What is rebirth?
> (Excerpta ex Theodoto *78.1–2)*

It is this kind of knowledge, of our ultimate origin, our fall into this world and its hostile powers and rescue from it, which seems to underlie the mythological schemes of Irenaeus' Gnostics and Valentinians (as well as Basilidians and even perhaps Simonians), which we might take as characteristic of the falsely so-called *gnosis* attacked by Irenaeus and his successors. It is the lack of such a scheme that tends to rule out Marcion as a proper representative of *gnosis*.

The problem of the definition of gnosis*, Gnostics and Gnosticism*

Such then is the evidence about the Gnostics and *gnosis* found in their opponents, Christian and pagan, with the former still ambiguous about the existence and variety of groups of Christians who

can be classed as 'Gnostics' – for example do they really all hark back to Simon? Do they include Marcion? What of the amazing variety of groups and systems in Pseudo-Hippolytus' *Refutation*?[4] What happens to them after the third century? Until recently, the patristic evidence tended to determine the way we saw such groups and defined Gnosticism, since the primary evidence to supplement the picture that emerged in the eighteenth century reflected an evidently late and degenerate form.[5]

But the discovery first of the Berlin Codex BG 8502 in 1896 (although not published till 1955), then of the Nag Hammadi Library of Coptic texts in December 1945, contained in twelve codices still in their leather covers (see Figure 42.1) and leaves of a thirteenth, and including most sensationally *The Gospel of Thomas*, transformed the situation by its infusion of primary texts, the vast majority hitherto unknown, some possibly dating back in their original form to the second century or earlier. Here at last was a chance to put the fathers' and pagans' claims and judgments to the test. The Nag Hammadi and Berlin texts are conveniently available in English translation (Robinson 1996; Meyer 2007).

Now the striking thing about the Berlin Codex and Nag Hammadi Library was the existence in them of no less than four versions of a post-resurrection revelation discourse of the Saviour to his disciples, the *Apocryphon* (or Secret Book) *of John* (see Figure 42.2, showing the end of this document and beginning of *The Gospel of Thomas*), whose first part bore a remarkable resemblance to Irenaeus' account of the 'Barbelognostics', while its second part was related, if more indirectly, to his account of the 'Ophites' in the following chapter. Further, the Nag Hammadi Library contained treatises of apparently Valentinian provenance which tended to confirm both the overall picture and certain divergent details of the Valentinian systems built up from study of Irenaeus, Pseudo-Hippolytus and Clement.[6]

None of these texts, however, contained the self-designation 'Gnostic', and both discoveries contained works which did not seem compatible either with the heretical classification of the fathers or with their categorisation of *gnosis*. Thus we find in the collection some works which seem at first sight to bear no trace of Christian influence,[7] some clearly pagan works, philosophical, ascetic and hermetic,[8] and the rest with varying degrees of Christian colouring, including one, *The Sophia of Jesus Christ*, which was an unmistakable Christianisation of the apparently non-Christian *Eugnostos*. However, two of the texts, *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*, are in all probability very similar, if not identical, to those mentioned by Porphyry as the recent concoctions of Plotinus' Christian 'Gnostic' friends, the former rebutted in forty books(!) by his pupil, Amelius.[9] The first western scholar to examine

Figure 42.1 The Nag Hammadi Codices, with their original leather covers, from a photo taken by Jean Doresse in Cairo in 1949. Photo courtesy of The Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, Claremont, California

and publicise the texts, Jean Doresse, tried to identify them as the library of Epiphanius' 'Sethians' (Doresse 1960), but his interpretation was not widely accepted.

Nevertheless, the publication of the most well-preserved and interesting texts such as *The Gospel of Truth*, evidently Valentinian and echoing Irenaeus' lapidary summary of that form of *gnosis*,[10] *The Apocryphon of John* and *The Sophia of Jesus Christ*, supplementing the information Doresse was able to provide from his cursory examination of the bulk of the Nag Hammadi texts, allowed a major colloquium on the origins of Gnosticism to take place in Messina in 1966 (Bianchi 1967). Building, if critically, on the scholarship of the German History of Religions School, which had sought to see Gnosticism (*Gnosis* in German) as a relatively independent Hellenistic religion of salvation emanating from the Orient, with a developed Redeemed Redeemer myth which had influenced Christianity (Reitzenstein 1904, 1921; Bousset 1907; Bultmann 1962), the Colloquium attempted to produce a definition of the phenomenon. It sought to differentiate between the more general term '*gnosis*' defined as 'knowledge of divine mysteries reserved for an élite', and 'Gnosticism' as applied more specifically to an assortment of religious systems beginning in the second century CE as attested by the heresiologists.

Figure 42.2 The end of *The Apocryphon of John* and beginning of *The Gospel of Thomas* from the Nag Hammadi Codices. Photo courtesy of The Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, Claremont, California

Building on the evidence from the Nag Hammadi texts, coupled with Epiphanius' account of the Sethians, Hans-Martin Schenke claimed to detect the existence of a group of Sethian Gnostics with their distinctive treatises, on the basis of certain shared characteristics and features (Schenke 1974, 1981). The category of 'Sethian' he expanded to include not only Christian groups (such as Irenaeus' Barbelognostics, Epiphanius' Gnostics, Sethians and Archontics and the Christian 'heretics' of Plotinus), and Christian texts (such as *The Apocryphon of John*, *The Gospel of the Egyptians*, *Trimorphic Protennoia* and the Untitled Text from the Bruce Codex), but apparently non-Christian texts (such as *The Apocalypse of Adam*, *The Three Steles of Seth*, *Zostrianos* and *Marsanes*), even when such texts did not feature heavenly Seth. He suggested that such a group of pre-Christian Gnostics could well have arisen in a Samaritan milieu, and then in encounter with Christianity have given their texts a superficial Christianisation, while still retaining their distinct and alien essence and not ultimately synthesising with Christianity (Schenke 1981: 607–13).

The severest critic of Schenke's 'Sethian Gnostic' hypothesis was Frederik Wisse (1971, 1981), who was also the most sceptical about the classifications of the heresiologists and saw the Nag Hammadi texts not as evidence for the teaching of a sect or sects, but rather as the inspired creations of individuals who did not feel bound by the opinions of a religious community (1981: 585). However, Wisse's sceptical essay was published in a two-volume treatment (Layton 1980, 1981) of what had come to be accepted by many as the two main schools of Gnosticism, the (Christian) Valentinians and the (pre-Christian) Sethians. Indeed, what the editor of the volumes, Bentley Layton, has identified as Gnostic scripture with its 'classic Gnostic myth' is virtually identical to Schenke's 'Sethian' texts (Layton 1987: xiif.; 1995). More recently, the Tchacos Codex containing *The Gospel of Judas*, discovered in Middle Egypt in the 1970s but only published after painstaking restoration work in 2007 (Kasser *et al.* 2007), has been argued to be another collection made by Gnostics, particularly since *The Gospel of Judas* contains a version of the 'classic myth' found in *The Apocryphon of John* (Logan 2009: 13–19).

There have been two recent significant contributions to the problem of defining Gnosticism: Tuomas Rasimus's attempt (2009) to improve on Schenke's 'Sethian Gnostic' hypothesis and David Brakke's attempt (2010) to define Gnostics more precisely in terms of Layton's 'classic myth'. Rasimus identifies three types of Gnostic thought, the earliest 'Ophite' as attested by Irenaeus, Celsus and Origen, 'Barbeloite' which focuses on the divine realm, and 'Sethite' which focuses on biblical Seth and was introduced later into Ophite and Barbeloite myths. These three systems are fused in various ways to form what he designates as 'classic Gnostic'. Thus he seeks to enlarge the corpus of Schenke's 'Sethian Gnostic' texts to include his 'Ophite' texts.[11] Brakke, a pupil of Layton, seeks to identify the Gnostics by focusing only on texts which display the Barbelognostic myth and reflect its rituals, particularly baptism.[12] Both approaches, as well as my 2006 book, sought to deal with a radical questioning, not only of the Messina definitions and the suggested classification of main Gnostic schools but of the entire concept of 'Gnosticism' (Williams 1996; King 2003). Williams argues that since there is no true consensus even among experts on a definition of the category 'Gnosticism', and since it has only succeeded in generating greater confusion, it should be abandoned. Thus although there is some agreement about certain features, such as that the material cosmos was created by one or more lower demiurges, other claimed defining features are much more problematic. They usually include the idea of a radically new attitude to the created order, one of 'protest' or 'revolt', an 'anti-cosmic attitude', as illustrated in the way Gnostics treated scripture (by reversing its sense in a kind of 'protest exegesis', particularly of Genesis), viewed the cosmos (by allegedly rejecting it), looked at society (supposedly despising it), and felt about their own bodies (hating them). Apparently lacking any ethical concern, their view of themselves as 'saved by nature' by their inner spiritual character is supposed to have led to two characteristic responses, either of fanatical ascetic renunciation of the world, sex and the body, or of unrestrained licence and lawlessness (Williams 1996: 4f.).

Williams tests each of these defining characteristics and concludes that none of them adequately corresponds to the sheer diversity of the evidence. He suggests as a more suitable and less restrictive category, 'biblical demiurgical', which avoids the misinterpretations bound up with 'Gnosticism',

and does more justice to what for him are a series of related religious innovations and new religious movements. King's 2003 book, *What is Gnosticism?*, exposes how much modern scholarship on 'Gnosticism' is based on a mistaken reification of what was a polemical construct designed by the heresiologists as a way of defining themselves as 'true' Christians over against a heretical 'Other'. Thus modern scholars have inadvertently reinforced the polemical agenda of hostile witnesses such as Irenaeus and Epiphanius.

Is 'Gnosticism' as a category therefore simply to be abandoned as too vague and misleading? Williams's case that too wide and vague a definition has been offered in the past is convincing, but it has been effectively countered by a much narrower focus on those who called themselves or were designated 'Gnostics' (Layton, Brakke, myself), had a characteristic myth (Brakke) or set of related myths (Rasimus, myself), and practised a distinct initiation ritual (Brakke, myself). However, one of the strengths of Williams's book is his utilisation of insights from sociologists of religion such as Rodney Stark to cast light on the way new religious movements arise and grow or decline. Thus although he would argue that we should not think of a single phenomenon, Gnosticism or the Gnostic religion, and try to define a single essence or seek a single origin for it, he does allow the validity of exploring individual traditions such as the 'Sethian', and the way they tend to resemble the schismatic 'church movements' or 'sect movements' identified by Stark and other sociologists of religion.

Williams here primarily refers to the distinction between church and sect in terms of 'ideal types' pioneered by Ernst Troeltsch, a pupil of Max Weber (Troeltsch 1931: 331–43). But Troeltsch's 'ideal types' with their half a dozen characteristics have proved impossible to use for theorising. Thus Stark, building on the narrower definition that churches accept their social environment while sects reject it, suggests that churches are nearer the low tension pole and sects to the high, with the latter becoming more church-like and sparking off new sects desiring greater tension with their social environment (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 19–67). On this basis, Williams would see the Valentinians and Basilidians as 'church movements' aiming to reduce tension, and the Marcionites as 'sect movements'.

More promisingly perhaps, he also draws attention to Stark and Bainbridge's use of the term 'cult' as distinct from church and sect. They define cults as non-schismatic deviant groups which are innovatory, introducing an alien (external) religion or inventing a new indigenous one. They distinguish three types of contemporary cults: audience cults, client cults and cult movements. The first are literary, involving no formal organisation or group commitment to a dogma (e.g. astrology); the second involve a therapist-client relationship (e.g. psychoanalysis), while only the third are genuinely religious, seeking to satisfy the religious needs of believers (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 24–30). However, Williams does not appear to have sufficiently taken in the full import of these definitions, still treating his biblical demiurgical movements as basically sects, of which some are more church-like than others, rather than as cults. Indeed, one only has to ask the question in terms of the Stark-Bainbridge definitions of sect and cult to see that 'cult movements' seem most appropriate. To supporters of the majority opinion that Gnosticism emerged from Judaism (e.g. Rudolph 1984: 276ff; Pearson 1990), and of the minority view that sees it as an offshoot of Christianity (e.g. Pétrement 1991), one has to pose the question: is it then a schismatic, revival movement or movements harking back to the past (a sect), or not rather a new religious movement or movements offering new answers to old problems (a cult)? Are such movements exclusivist, cutting themselves off from the Catholics, establishing a rival church (like the Marcionites), or do they not rather seek to mingle with the Catholics while claiming to be the true, perfect Christians? Is it not instructive in this regard that while Marcion was excommunicated and expelled from the Roman church, Valentinus was not, and even almost became a bishop?[13]

The Gnostics, their beliefs and practices

So perhaps the most promising approach to the questions of defining Gnosticism, identifying its adherents and illuminating its origins, lies in seeing the phenomenon as involving a series of related

cults rather than sect movements, which arose within the general religious milieu of Judaism and Christianity, and sought to answer pressing questions within that milieu in new ways. Stark has suggested the key role played by religious geniuses, unusually creative individuals with deep religious concerns who perceive shortcomings in conventional faiths, as something which increases during periods of social crisis. During such periods, the numbers of people who receive novel revelations and the number willing to receive them is maximised. The more reinforcement the recipient receives, the more likely they are to have more revelations. And the interaction between successful founder and their followers tends to amplify heresy. The result of these interactions is more radical revelations (Stark 1992: 19–34).

Such a scenario of visionary geniuses founding cults to offer new solutions to pressing problems, arising out of social, political and cultural pressures but expressed in predominantly religious terms, may go a long way to account for movements labelled 'Gnostic', and to help distinguish them from other, more sectarian movements such as Marcionitism. Such cult movements may have arisen in Judaism and may be reflected in such phenomena as the *minim* of the rabbis and belief in two powers in heaven, or in paganism as with the Jewish-influenced Hermetic *gnosis* of the *Poimandres* (Pearson 1990: 139–47), but we have insufficient evidence to work with in such cases, and are soon led into uncontrolled speculation. We are on much firmer ground if, mindful of Williams's strictures, we confine ourselves to those movements from the late first century which either call themselves 'Gnostic' or appeal to a higher, saving knowledge, knowledge of the divine self, which embrace a Platonic hierarchical world view and myth and related ritual of fall and restoration of the divine, and which seem to arise in a dialectic with a Judaism in crisis over its identity.

Thus it is surely no coincidence that the earliest movements which appear to meet our criteria of what is 'Gnostic' seem to occur in areas where there is longstanding opposition to Judaism, such as Samaria in the first century (Simon and Menander), or in communities in which emergent Christianity is locked in conflict with a dominant Judaism, such as Antioch in the early second century (Ignatius, Saturninus, Irenaeus' Gnostics), or where Jews were facing the threat of extinction, such as Egypt, and Alexandria in particular, in the wake of the great Jewish revolt under Trajan (Basilides and Valentinus). Stark and Bainbridge have drawn attention to the fact that increasingly secularised Jews, of whatever era, are strikingly more liable to join cult movements (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 400–3). The other feature they isolate as significant for the rise of cults is also characteristic of these places and this period, namely the lack of a dominant religion, something also true of Rome (Simonians, Gnostics, Valentinus).

When, where and why did such Gnostic cult movements originate? The picture of the phenomenon I have presented so far suggests that if we are to continue to speak of 'Gnosticism', it can only accurately be applied to cult movements within a general Jewish and Christian milieu which called themselves 'Gnostic' or understood salvation in terms of self-knowledge, awareness of the essential kinship between the inner self, soul or spirit, and the divine. Such movements only make sense in the light of an overall myth or system which consciously reflects a Platonic world view with its hierarchical levels of reality and myth of the soul and its fall and reascent. Further, such movements, if we accept the Stark-Bainbridge thesis, tend to emerge as novel attempts to resolve pressing problems, social, political, religious, in a period of crisis.

This would seem to suggest that although elements which later became 'Gnostic' in the above sense were undoubtedly present in the first century when Christianity was emerging, they cannot be said to be 'Gnostic' in the strict sense, and thus one is not entitled to speak of a pre-Christian 'Gnosticism' or of 'Gnosticism' in Corinth. If therefore we exclude pre-Christian and first-century phenomena, we come to figures and movements at the beginning of the second century, such as Saturninus, Basilides and the shadowy opponents of Ignatius and also perhaps of the writers of Colossians and the Pastorals. Irenaeus' summary of Saturninus' views includes a single Father, unknown to all, seven angelic creators of the world and humanity, made after the image of the supreme power (cf. Gen. 1:26), but inferior until animated because of the likeness by that power

with a divine spark which ascends to the supreme Father at death. To this hierarchical and dualistic picture are added a certain anti-Jewish animus and a docetic Christology: the unbegotten and incorporeal Saviour, Christ, appears like a human being to destroy the creator angels, including the God of the Jews, for their enmity to the Father, and to wipe out the evil class of humans and their assisting demons, while saving the other, good, class, those with the divine spark. The final element is an ascetic rejection of marriage, procreation and animal food. All this is based on a distinctive critical interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies: some were spoken by the world-creating angels, some by Satan, an apostate angel resisting the seven, and the Jewish God in particular (Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1.24.1–3).

In view of this, it is no wonder that Layton, who includes Saturninus in his section on classic Gnostic scripture, has remarked that despite its extreme compression, it refers to almost all parts of the Gnostic myth and related topics, including anthropology, principles of biblical interpretation, Christology and ethics (Layton 1987: 159). Saturninus' system seems to reflect controversies between Jews and Christians in Antioch over vexed topics such as the proper interpretation of scripture on issues like the origin of evil and the goodness of the created order, the meaning of humanity being made in the image and likeness of God, the accuracy of messianic prophecy, etc. And even if we cannot identify Saturninus and his followers as among the direct targets of Ignatius in his letters, the same range of issues seems to be involved, as he battles with Judaisers who reject his Christological interpretation of the Septuagint and docetists who deny the reality of Christ's humanity and suffering and reject the materiality of the Eucharist.

But Saturninus' system has inbuilt tensions and inconsistencies, especially between the idea of the spark in all and the idea of two races (Logan 1996: 168f.), no real explanation of how everything originated, no proper myth, or developed assimilation of Platonic philosophy, and he does not seem to have engendered a lasting movement. Basilides, associated with him by Irenaeus but based in Alexandria, goes some way to make up those deficiencies. Irenaeus' account, again based on Justin, begins with a cosmogonic myth: from the supreme unengendered Father is engendered Intellect (*nous*), from Intellect Word (*logos*), from Word Prudence, from Prudence Wisdom (*sophia*) and Power. Wisdom and Power produce powers, rulers and angels who create the first of 365 heavens by a series of emissions, corresponding to the number of days in the year. The last heaven, this visible one of ours, was created by angels, of whom the god of the Jews was chief.

Here Basilides' anti-Jewish animus becomes evident in what may be a veiled allusion to the Jewish revolt of 115–17 CE: because the Jews' god wished to subject all nations to them, the rest opposed him and the Jewish nation. This provoked the nameless Father to send his firstborn, Intellect, called Christ, to save those who believed in him from the world-creating powers. Again the Christology is docetic: Christ appeared on earth as a man, but did not suffer; Simon of Cyrene was crucified in his stead, while Jesus, in his form, stood by laughing. As an incorporeal power, he could transform himself as he liked. He ascended to the Father unimpeded and invisible. So those who have this knowledge(!) have been liberated from the world and its rulers (*archons*), and should not confess the man who was crucified, but the one who came in human form to destroy the works of the creator powers. Thus salvation involves only the soul; the body is by nature corruptible. Basilides too has a distinctive, anti-Jewish way of interpreting scripture: the prophets were created by the world-creating powers while the law was the special handiwork of the god of the Jews. Finally, his ethical stance was reportedly one of indifference both regarding meat offered to idols and other kinds of behaviour and pleasure (Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1.24.4–6).

Irenaeus' sketch is complemented by Clement of Alexandria, writing at the turn of the second century CE. He is quite sympathetic at times and offers perhaps the most accurate, if limited, information.[14] He implies that Basilides taught an original ogdoad, and was an eclectic Christian philosopher blending Stoic ethical concerns with a Platonic and Pythagorean belief in reincarnation (Layton 1987: 415–44). But our knowledge of Basilides remains fragmentary and we cannot reconstruct his myth in any detail, although we do have evidence of a continuing movement, and Basilidians are

one of the very few groups named in the Nag Hammadi texts, criticised along with Simonians and Valentinians for their liberal attitude towards marriage.[15] Moreover, Basilides is also clearly relevant for our definition of what constitutes 'Gnostic' in that he seems among the first to have properly assimilated Platonic philosophy, its hierarchy and emanative system, its belief in the superiority of the soul and its reincarnation.

But it is with the Gnostics of Irenaeus that we can confidently speak of a group or groups that did call themselves and fully deserve the title 'Gnostic', that do represent a successful cult movement which developed a 'classic myth' and ritual of initiation which profoundly influenced the greatest and most Christian Gnostic movement of all, that of the Valentinians. Indeed, I would contend that this cult movement embraces all the phenomena which Schenke classes as 'Sethian' and also takes in the 'Ophians' of Celsus and Origen, the Naassenes, the Aurelii with their mysterious hypogeum in Rome (Logan 2006, chapter 5), the Gnostics of Plotinus and Porphyry as well as the Borborites and other related groups. Furthermore, members of this movement I would claim were responsible both for collecting the Nag Hammadi texts as their library and for the Tchacos Codex (Logan 2006: 12–29, 2009: 3–21).

But can we determine where, when and why the Gnostics began? Although Justin does not seem to be aware of them, I have argued that behind the shadowy figures in Antioch targeted by Ignatius, particularly in his Ephesian, Trallian and Smyrnaean letters, may lie the pioneers of the Gnostic cult. Ignatius implies that the group he is combatting claims to be Christian, has shared with the community in the initiation rite of chrismation, but rejects the reality of the incarnation, cross and resurrection of Christ, as attested by law, prophets and gospel, and does not recognise or share in the Eucharist (*Ephesians* 7–9, 14, 17–20; *Trallians* 6–7, 9–11; *Smyrnaeans* 1–7). Now the key to understanding the identity of the Gnostics and the factor which unites the varied phenomena would appear to lie in the interaction of myth and ritual which underlies such disparate texts as *The Apocryphon of John* and the Naassene Preaching.

The creative genius behind the Gnostic myth and ritual clearly shared the concerns of Saturninus and Basilides, the proper interpretation of scripture as regards creation, humanity, the messiah, law and ethics, etc. in opposition both to the Jews who had expelled Christians from their synagogues, and to Judaising Christians, but he/she seems to have started with the intoxicating experience of being born again as a Christian in the initiation rite of baptism and chrismation. What he/she adds seems to have been developed out of that culminating saving experience in which the Gnostic initiate imitates the birth, naming and chrismation of the heavenly Son in the rite of baptism in the name of the Gnostic triad followed by the five seals rite of chrismation (Logan 1997: 188–93, 2006: 78–81). This frees him/her from the consequences of a primal fall, that of heavenly Wisdom/Sophia. The new elements are thus the heavenly triad and related ritual of Father, Mother and Son, and the myth of Sophia, but they are evidently based on the same Old Testament evidence used by mainstream Christians to construct their theologies (i.e. Prov. 3:19; 8:22ff.; Wisd. 7:25f.; Pss 2, 8, 45, 110) and on existing initiation rites. The other key element, alluded to in Saturninus, but given a fundamental role reflecting the greater assimilation of Platonic ideas, is that of heavenly archetype and earthly copy.

The myth, whose first, theo- and cosmogonic part is summarised in Irenaeus' *Adv. haer.* 1.29, occurs in full in *The Apocryphon of John*, supplemented by other Nag Hammadi treatises such as *The Gospel of the Egyptians* and *Trimorphic Protennoia* (Logan 1996). It first relates the origin of the heavenly triad, Father, Mother and Son, and traces the development of the heavenly world by male-female pairs of aeons, culminating in the appearance of heavenly Adamas, the archetype of humanity. It then recounts the genesis of this visible world through the error of the lowest aeon, Sophia. She tries to produce without her partner and without the consent of the supreme Father, the result being the ignorant and arrogant Demiurge, Ialdabaoth, creator and ruler of this world and Old Testament God. His hybristic claim to be the only God results in the appearance of heavenly Adamas, whom he then gets his seven archons to copy (Gen. 1:26f.).

Genesis 1–4, suitably reinterpreted, thus becomes the second act of the cosmic drama. Earthly man is made after the heavenly image, but his/her essence is the divine power of Sophia inbreathed by the Demiurge (Gen. 2:7) to enable him to stand upright. Alarmed by such autonomy, Ialdabaoth plots to recover the divine power, and the events of Genesis and the rest of human history till the coming of the Saviour are represented as a series of moves by Sophia and countermoves by Ialdabaoth and his seven archons, rulers of the planets. Thus, the human fleshly body, the division of the sexes, life in this world, law and ethics, sexual intercourse, fate itself, the efforts of the angels to mate with human women (Gen. 6:4) and in these last days the counterfeit spirit (i.e. the anti-Christ), are all devices of Ialdabaoth to keep the Gnostics trapped in this world and rob them of their divine power.

Salvation, as with Basilides, only involves the soul, not the spiritual element, as with the Valentinians, as we shall see. The present versions of the *Apocryphon*, particularly the long recension with its triple descent of a female Saviour figure, seem to have obscured the original pattern suggested by the 'Ophite' version, of Sophia's interim intervention to ensure the survival of the divine power until the Saviour's final saving descent and revelation. The dialogue on the fates of different souls, however, better preserves the basic Gnostic understanding of salvation in its intriguing and subtle solution to the classic dilemma faced by all Christians: how to balance divine initiative (the promise of universal salvation and the irresistibility of divine grace) and human response (the reality of human free will and human refusal). Thus they were able to avoid both the terrible predestinarian tangles of a salvation by nature approach (with which Valentinians were charged) or an appeal to the irresistibility of grace (to which Augustine was forced), on the one hand, and the unrealistic perfectionism of Pelagius, on the other.

The Gnostic solution is to understand the light power of the Mother present in all humanity as the *capacity* for salvation, which yet needs the descent of the Father's Holy Spirit in the rite of sealing/chrismation for completion. Salvation depends on which spirit dominates; the Holy Spirit or its demonic counterpart, the counterfeit spirit. Those souls on whom the Holy Spirit descends will be saved; all they need is ascetic freedom from the passions, using the flesh as a mere vehicle until on death they ascend to heaven. But those souls on whom the counterfeit spirit descends will be led astray, although there is always the possibility, via transmigration, of gaining the saving knowledge and ascending. Nevertheless, not all souls will be saved; those who had the saving knowledge but rejected it and repudiated the descent of the Spirit in the five seals rite of chrismation (the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit) will suffer eternal punishment.[16]

One of the major problems posed by the Gnostics, partly perhaps because of their ability to disguise themselves as mainstream Christians, partly perhaps because of the paucity of evidence about the early Christians and the increasing success of the mainstream over against their rivals, whose texts were either suppressed or ceased to be copied and transmitted, is the lack of concrete evidence about their communities. All we appear to have, by chance or through their preservation by opponents, are the texts. However, I have argued that the mysterious early third-century hypogeum of the Aurelii in Rome (Figure 42.3), with its fascinating wall paintings, does represent the burial place of a Roman Gnostic community (Logan 2006, Chapter 5). Certain key paintings, particularly of Adam, Eve and the serpent and the naked Adam and his disconsolate creator of chamber A and of the mysterious triad of older and younger males and veiled female in the vault of chamber B, as well as other features of the hypogeum, seem best explained in terms of a Roman Gnostic community similar to the Naassenes.

What is more, even if these Gnostics tend to disappear as such in the later heresiological accounts, there is plenty of evidence of the spread and success of movements inspired by them right on into the eighth century (Layton 1987: 6f.). It is in the very nature of such cult movements, after all, to change and transmute, a charge brought against them by Irenaeus himself. Indeed the very prominence of the figure of heavenly Seth in the Nag Hammadi documents, which contributed both to modern arguments for the pre-Christian Jewish character of 'Gnosticism' and to Schenke's 'Sethian' hypothesis is, I have argued, in fact the result of a Sethianising reinterpretation at the end of the second and

beginning of the third centuries, in response both to Catholic criticism of the novelty of the Gnostic claims, and to the general rise of interest in the figure of Seth (Logan 1996: 47f.). But what is striking about the evidence from Nag Hammadi and elsewhere, is the way that despite such reinterpretation, basic features and figures recur, even in such distant and degenerate forms of the myth as the Untitled Text from the Bruce Codex and the Gnostic (or Borborite), Sethian and Archontic systems described by Epiphanius.

What then of Valentinus and the Valentinians, the most Christian of the Gnostic movements? Irenaeus speaks of Valentinus as the first to adapt the fundamental principles of the so-called Gnostic sect (*hairesis*) to his own brand of teaching (*Adv. haer.* 1.11.1), while at the end of his sections on the Gnostics he remarks that from these teachings, like the Lernaean hydra, was born the many-headed wild beast of the school of Valentinus.[17] This is not just another piece of heresiological rhetoric, for we do indeed find remarkable similarities between the two systems, particularly as regards the heavenly world of the aeons, the Sophia myth and the ritual of initiation, but Valentinus was a great poetic genius in his own right, a visionary who attracted creative pupils, more of whose names have been preserved than of any other such cult founder. Thus the heresiologists tell us of the Italian school

Figure 42.3 The hypogeum of the Aurelii, ceiling of chamber B. Photo by permission of the Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra, Rome

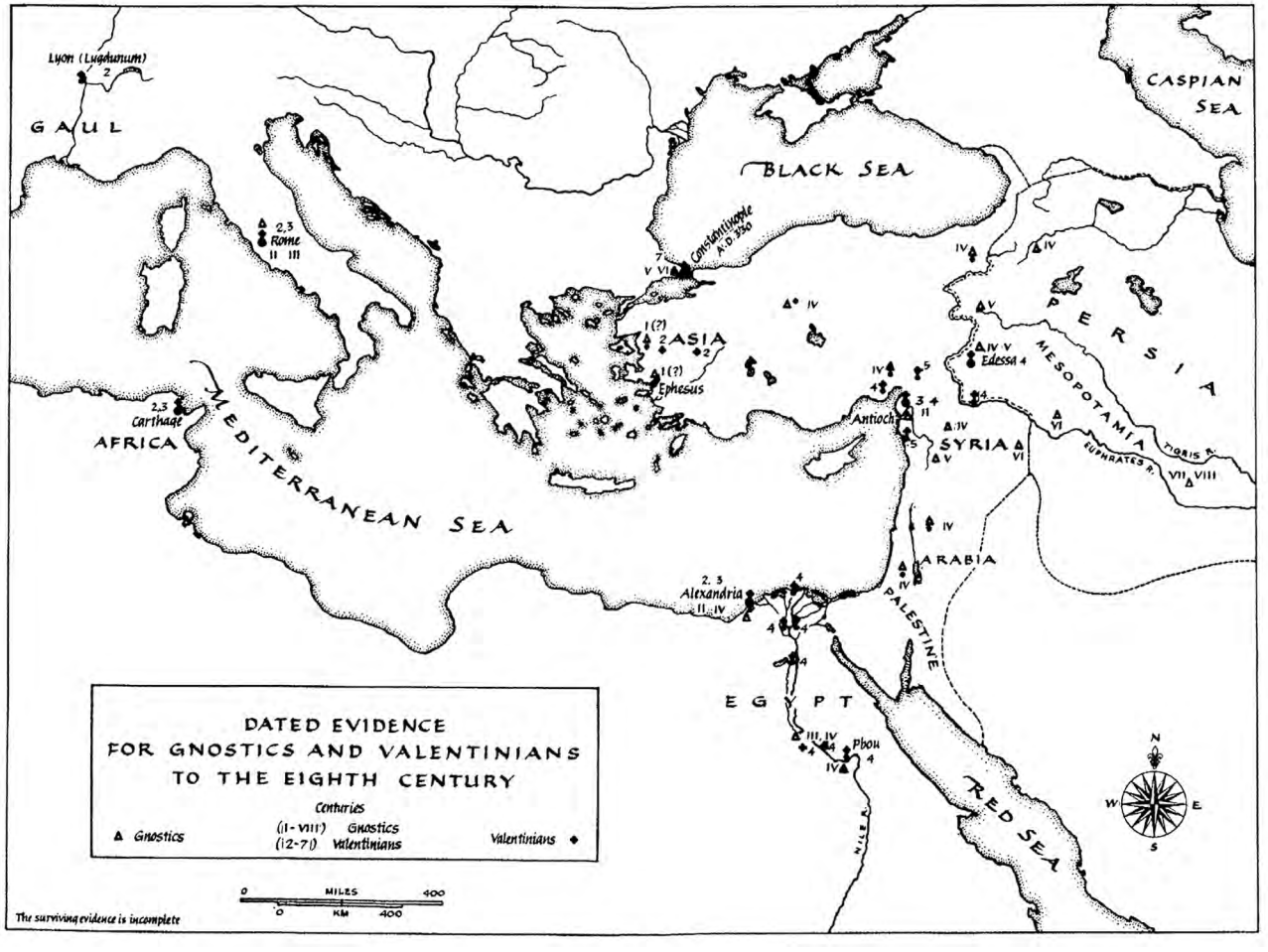

Figure 42.4 A map of dated evidence for the Gnostics and Valentinians to the eighth century; from *The Gnostic Scriptures* by Bentley Layton. Copyright ©1987 by Bentley Layton; used by permission of Yale University Press

of Ptolemy (whose system is summarised by Irenaeus at length) and Heracleon, the first to write a scriptural commentary (on John, first accepted by Gnostics as authoritative), of Secundus, Marcus the magus (whose followers were active in the Rhone valley in Irenaeus' time), of Theotimus and Theodotus (from whom Clement collected valuable excerpts), and of the eastern school of Axionicus of Antioch and Ardesianes, who saw the Saviour's body as spiritual (like Valentinus, but unlike the Italian school which considered it psychic).[18] Thomassen (2006) considers this distinction to be of major soteriological significance.

Valentinians crop up all over the ancient world, from Lyons to the valley of the Tigris, from the second to the eighth centuries (Layton 1987: 10f.; see Figure 42.4), and the Nag Hammadi Library has contributed several texts which appear to be Valentinian,[19] adding priceless original material to the few fragments in the fathers, and thereby helping us to assess with much greater confidence the accuracy and objectivity of their accounts. Unfortunately, besides the Justin/Irenaeus material, we only have fragments of Valentinus himself, largely preserved by Clement of Alexandria and more concerned with his ethics than his theology. Christoph Markschies, basing himself on the fragments, denies that Valentinus was responsible for the Valentinian myth; he was a Christian Platonist whose followers developed the characteristic myth Irenaeus describes (Markschies 1992).

But over against such a judgment based on such limited evidence we have to set, on the one hand, the picture we get from other sources of a visionary, founder of a cult with one of the most evocative myths of all time, and, on the other, the fact that even the fragments seem to hint at the myth (Logan 1994: 310–13) and to contain numerous Valentinian ideas (Thomassen 2006: 430–90). Thus Pseudo-Hippolytus records how Valentinus saw a tiny child, newly born, and asked him who he was, and he answered that he was the Logos. Then he added to this an imposing myth and on this wants to base the sect (*hairesis*) founded by him (*Ref. haer.* 6.42.2). The 'imposing myth' evidently reflects that of the Gnostics, particularly as it centres on Sophia. The Valentinus of the fragments comes over as a very winning personality, author of letters, homilies and books. And what is striking about Valentinianism, which must be due in no small part to the character and contributions of its founder, is the way that his pupils, despite all their variations and innovations gleefully charted by the heresiologists and present in original texts, retain key features and do not break away to form rival cults.

So what was Valentinus' contribution? What was the crisis to which he creatively responded? We have noted Basilides' likely response to the Jewish revolt and his assimilation of contemporary philosophy, Stoic and Platonic. Valentinus, a younger fellow Alexandrian, seems to have followed a similar path. Colin Roberts has drawn attention to the vacuum in Egypt caused by the virtual extinction of Judaism and the Jewish Christianity associated with it (Roberts 1979). The failure of yet another Jewish messianic uprising and, by implication, of their understanding of their God, may have represented that crisis. Valentinus seems to have sought to fill that vacuum by the introduction of a Pauline theology of divine grace and election, of spiritual versus psychic, with further assimilation to pagan thought, particularly Platonism. His theogony involves a sophisticated reworking of the Gnostic scheme, borrowing Pythagorean categories (dyad, tetrad, ogdoad) to produce a heavenly world or Pleroma of thirty aeons as mental aspects of God, and developing the Gnostic pairing of male and female aeons into the fundamental ontological and soteriological principle of syzygy.

Irenaeus' account has Valentinus start from an original dyad of Father and Silence who emanate the remaining twenty-eight aeons, which Tertullian notes were entirely in the mind of God (Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1.11.1; Tertullian, *Adv. Val.* 4). One of the final twelve falls away (i.e. Sophia) and produces Christ outside the Pleroma. He immediately returns within, while she, bereft of spiritual substance, produces the Demiurge and a left-hand ruler (i.e. Satan), as with the Gnostics, comments Irenaeus. He notes Valentinus' distinction between Christ and Jesus (as with the 'Ophites'), and the role of the Holy Spirit fructifying the aeons of the Pleroma. The rest of Valentinus' system has to be conjectured from the fragments and the systems of his pupils, but what does emerge seems to be a systematic expansion of the Platonic theme of archetype and image, a rather hostile view of the Demiurge and his creator angels (like Saturninus, Basilides and the Gnostics), a development

of the idea of the divine as spiritual seed rather than a power, as with the Gnostics, an emphasis on Pauline themes of the grace of God and the law written on the heart, and an understanding of Christ as entirely spiritual, body and all.[20]

The remaining accounts of Valentinian theology and original texts seem to represent variations on these themes, often in an attempt to soften the monstrous claim of a divine error or fall by positing two Sophias (Ptolemy), or in a very sophisticated exculpation of God for allowing the whole process (*The Tripartite Tractate*), or in a mystical meditation demythologising the all-too-ugly details, which has been attributed to Valentinus (*The Gospel of Truth*). Finally, the Valentinian treatise from Codex XI, while presenting certain idiosyncratic features, does roughly correspond to the picture presented by the heresiologists, being often close to what we have attributed to Valentinus himself.

What is new in all this is the sophisticated treatment of the themes of fullness and deficiency as ontological principles, of male angel and female elect, of the derivation of the cosmos from the emotions of fallen Sophia and the consequent division of reality into three categories and types of humanity; the spiritual (Sophia's seed sown in the world through the Demiurge, which alone is subject to salvation, according to Valentinus and the more original eastern school), the psychic (the handiwork of the Demiurge and consubstantial (*homoousios*!) with him, which is the subject of salvation according to the Italian school, who thus teach that the spiritual are 'saved by nature'[21]), and the hylic or material (the work of Satan and incapable of salvation). Thus at the heart of the developed myth as found, e.g. in Ptolemy is the repeated pattern of fall and restoration at successively lower levels, first of Sophia, then of her offspring Achamoth, then of the spiritual seed, sown in this world, and the salvation or rescue of what is fallen by a series of Christ figures, the last being Jesus, supplying form and knowledge to remove the deficiency. Salvation into the Pleroma seems ultimately only for the spiritual seed which is depicted as female, united in marriage with its male angelic counterpart in the Valentinian sacrament of the bridal chamber. The psychics, to whom the ordinary Christians belong, are the creatures of the Demiurge and may attain a middle level of salvation by good works, while the hylics are doomed to destruction.

But despite the deterministic sounding language, grace seems to be the keynote and 'become what you are' the motto.[22] And the Valentinians seem increasingly keen to be accepted both by Catholic Christians and by pagan society, forming a kind of bridge, modifying the fierce extremes of Christian asceticism and denial of the world, by seeing it, fallen as it is, as nevertheless the theatre for the formation and salvation of the elect seed, with a Demiurge who is ignorant, not evil, even attaining a degree of salvation. Their cultic rather than sectarian character and their ability to assimilate to Catholic Christianity enabled them to survive for centuries as a kind of fifth column, and this perhaps helps to explain both the apparent lack of evidence of distinctive Valentinian hierarchies and forms of organisation, on the one hand, but also the continuing obsession of Church and State with trying to flush them out, on the other. The similarities with modern 'New Age' movements are evident here as elsewhere.

But what of the other texts found at Nag Hammadi, neither Gnostic nor Valentinian? What of the most sensational find there which has generated more debate and literature than the rest put together, *The Gospel of Thomas*? How does it fit in? The best solution seems to be to see the whole collection as the library or libraries of a Gnostic cult movement, containing their classic myth and scripture as well as authoritative works and fragments of whatever provenance on the soul, its nature, vicissitudes and salvation, reflecting a basically ascetic standpoint. Hence the inclusion both of Gnosticised Christian ascetic works of the Syrian Thomas tradition such as the *Gospel* and *Book of Thomas*, of pagan ascetic literature like *The Sentences of Sextus* and pagan *gnosis* such as the Hermetic works, as well as appropriate Valentinian material, mythological and liturgical. We find a similar mixture in the Tchacos Codex.[23] However the absence both of any sign of sexual exclusiveness (e.g. in the salvation of souls) as of any scriptural commentaries, and the relative sophistication of the texts might suggest a mixed, well-educated community like Lampe's Roman Valentinians (2003, chapter 27), my Roman Aurelii,

Plotinus' and Porphyry's Roman 'Gnostics' or Epiphanius' 'Gnostics' or 'Archontics', as the likely owners, undercutting the popular hypothesis that the texts were preserved and copied by Pachomian monks in their monasteries in the areas of Achmim and Chenoboskia (Logan 2006: 15–18).

Conclusion

'Gnosticism' and 'Gnostic' as designations of a clearly defined religious phenomenon of late antiquity have rightly been criticised for being too vague and misleading, unable to contain the great variety of phenomena usually so described. But if understood of and restricted to a related family of cult movements springing up within the religious milieu of Judaism and Christianity of the late first century on, which either used the self-designation 'Gnostic' or understood themselves within a Platonically influenced mythological scheme of 'fall' and restoration through a heavenly revealer-redeemer, then both can still be valid and useful. If such an understanding focusses primarily on the Gnostic and Valentinian movements described earlier, it can also embrace, as the Gnostics and their libraries did, the Jewish-influenced pagan *gnosis* of the Corpus Hermeticum. As cult movements seeking new answers to old problems and perhaps in the end alien to the spirit of Christianity, they yet were able to operate within it and exert a powerful influence on the emergence of what came to be 'orthodoxy'. They forced opponents like Irenaeus to develop an even better, more adequate, biblical and incarnational theology, and, in turn, as so often in the history of Christian doctrine, were plundered by mainstream figures like Clement and Origen for good ideas.[24]

Notes

1 Cf. Photius, *Bibliotheca*, 121. The work is perhaps reconstructable from Pseudo-Tertullian, *Adversus omnes haereses* and Epiphanius, *Panarion*, etc. On the distinction between the two, see Brent 1995.
2 Cf. *Stromateis* 2.11; 4.4.8f., 21ff.; 6–7 passim on the true Gnostic.
3 Cf. *Strom*. 2.11; 4.30.1; 7.7.41.1. On Prodicus, see Tertullian, *Scorpiace*.
4 Cf. Foerster 1972, who includes alongside the Barbelognostics, Naassenes and Valentinians, Simon, Saturninus, Basilides, the Carpocratians and the systems of Pseudo-Hippolytus as well as the pagan Hermetic *Poimandres* and the Christian encratite *Acts of Thomas*.
5 It consisted of three Coptic works of the fourth to fifth centuries CE: the treatise *Pistis Sophia* of the Codex Askewianus, a third-century revelation discourse of Jesus to his disciples about the fate of Pistis Sophia (Faith-Wisdom), and the two *Books of Jeu* and Untitled Text of the Bruce Codex, the former another revelation discourse of Jesus about the heavenly world illustrated by a series of enigmatic diagrams, the latter an account of the topography of the heavenly world involving aeons mentioned in Irenaeus' account of the Barbelognostic system.
6 For the latter, see Sagnard 1947 and Thomassen 2006.
7 E.g. The *Apocalypse of Adam, The Paraphrase of Shem, Marsanes*, etc.
8 E.g. Plato, *Republic* 588A–589B, *The Sentences of Sextus*, and the Hermetic works *On the Eighth and Ninth*, a *Prayer of Thanksgiving* and part of the *Asclepius*.
9 Cf. Porph. *Vita Plot*. 16.
10 Cf. The *Gospel of Truth*, Nag Hammadi Codex (NHC) I 18.7–11; 24.28–25.19 and *Adv. haer*. 1.21.4. See Jonas 1992: 309ff.
11 His 'Ophite' texts include *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, the second part of *The Apocryphon of John*, On the *Origin of the World*, *Eugnostos* and *The Sophia of Jesus Christ* as well as Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer*. 1.30, and Origen, *C. Cels*. 6.24–38.
12 Thus he identifies as Gnostic (50–1) (1) the groups described by Irenaeus and Porphyry; (2) works ascribed to them by Irenaeus and Porphyry, including *The Apocryphon of John, Zostrianos, Allogenes* and *The Gospel of Judas*; (3A) works widely accepted by scholars, *The Apocalypse of Adam, The Hypostasis of the Archons, Trimorphic Protennoia*, *The Gospel of the Egyptians, The Three Steles of Seth, Marsanes, Melchizedek*, The *Thought of Norea*; (3B) disputed works, *The Gospel of Judas*, *The Thunder* and the Untitled Text in the Bruce Codex; (4) other groups perhaps reflecting the Gnostic myth, the Saturninians of Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer*. 1.24.1–2, and Epiphanius' Gnostics, Sethians and Archontics.
13 Cf. Tertullian, *Adversus Valentinianos* 4.

14 Winrich Löhr (1996), in appealing only to Clement of Alexandria's fragments of Basilides, is perhaps too negative about Irenaeus' evidence.
15 Cf. *Testament of Truth* NHC IX 56.1–58.6.
16 NHC II 25.16–27.31; Berlin Codex (BG) 64.14–71.2.
17 *Adv. Haer.* 1.30.15. Pétrement (1991) tries to derive the Gnostics from the Valentinians. See Logan 1996, chapter 1.
18 Cf. Ps.-Hipp. *Ref. haer.* 6.35.5–7; Tert. *Adv. Val.* 4.
19 E.g. *The Gospel of Truth*, *On the Resurrection* and *The Tripartite Tractate* from Codex I, *The Gospel of Philip* from Codex II and the Valentinian treatise and liturgical fragments from Codex XI.
20 On Valentinus, see Quispel 1947; Stead 1969, 1980; Thomassen 2006.
21 Cf. Iren. *Adv. haer.* 1.6.2; Clem. Alex. *Exc. ex Theod.* 56.3. On this distinction based on the soteriological principle of 'mutual participation', see Thomassen 2006.
22 On Valentinian theology, see especially Pagels 1972 and Thomassen 2006.
23 It seems a collection of authoritative pseudepigrapha, Gnostic, Valentinian(?), Hermetic.
24 For an intriguing linking of the Gnostics, Valentinians and Origen, see Quispel 1980.

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43
MONTANISM

Christine Trevett

Montanism, a movement of prophesying and continuing revelation, originated in second-century Phrygia. Its hub was in Pepouza. Its earliest followers may have called it 'the Prophecy' or 'the New Prophecy',[1] which is what Tertullian its best-known advocate called it.[2] The term 'Montanism' is anachronistic for its earliest phase and appears first in Cyril of Jerusalem's fourth-century *Catachetical Lectures* (16.8).

Montanism has often been misunderstood and misrepresented, sometimes due to the conflation of disparate elements in opponents' accounts, taken from different periods and places. A 'Montanism' results which never existed. It was not a single, simple phenomenon, and understanding it requires careful distinction between geographical areas and between sources reflecting early and later dates in its history.

Evidence to the decade of the 230s is provided by Eusebius (the Anonymous and Apollonius among others); by Epiphanius (*Panarion* 48.1–13) using an Anonymous early source (Nasrallah 2003: 155–96; Tabbernee 2007: 50–3; Mader 2012); by Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis* 4.13.93.1; 7.17.108.1); Origen (*De principiis* 2.7.3 and in the *Catenae* on Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians [Heine 1989a: 99]), as well as by the much-debated 'Hippolytus' in Rome (Brent 1995; Tabbernee 2007: 70–9), in *Commentary on Daniel* 4.20; *Refutatio omnium haeresium* 8.19; 10.25–6. Some of Tertullian's writings reflect the New Prophecy's influence.

Although Montanism was mentioned but not condemned at Nicea,[3] 'literary warfare from a distance continued and increased' post 324 CE (Tabbernee 2007: 407).[4] Some later writers were depending on other anti-Montanist sources and/or including Montanism in lists of what by then were deemed heresies, more for completeness than because it was local reality. Later descriptions (Praedestinatus, Epiphanius, Jerome, Augustine and others) included tales of Montanists' infant-defiling rites and bloody Eucharistic offerings.

Knowledge of Montanism continues to advance, not least through study of epigraphy (some inscriptions once reckoned Montanist are now thought not to be); through fresh regional studies of religion in Asia Minor and elsewhere; through research on sources and authors and due to archaeological discovery.

The beginnings of Montanism

'Montanism' derives from the name of Montanus, a prophet who with two female prophets called Prisca/Priscilla and Maximilla initiated a movement within Christianity which spread quickly and

came into conflict with the developing catholic tradition. It survived longest in its area of origin and some opponents dubbed it the 'Phrygian/Cataphrygian' heresy (e.g. Eusebius *H.E.* 5.16.1).

Eusebius of Caesarea in the *Chronicon* and Epiphanius of Salamis in *Pan.* 48.1.2 offered conflicting dates for its beginnings: the latter *c.* 157 CE, the nineteenth year of Antoninus Pius, and Eusebius 171–2, the twelfth year of Marcus Aurelius. The issue is confused by these writers' vagueness or self-contradiction about other dates and events, and by the claim that Thyatira fell to the Prophecy at some point hard to establish (Epiphanius *Pan.* 51.33 being so opaque). Conclusions vary as to whether the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (dated either 150s or 160s) includes a critique of New Prophets (Kraft 1955; Frend 1964; Buschmann 1998; Hirschmann 2005; Dehandschutter 2007; Hartog 2013).

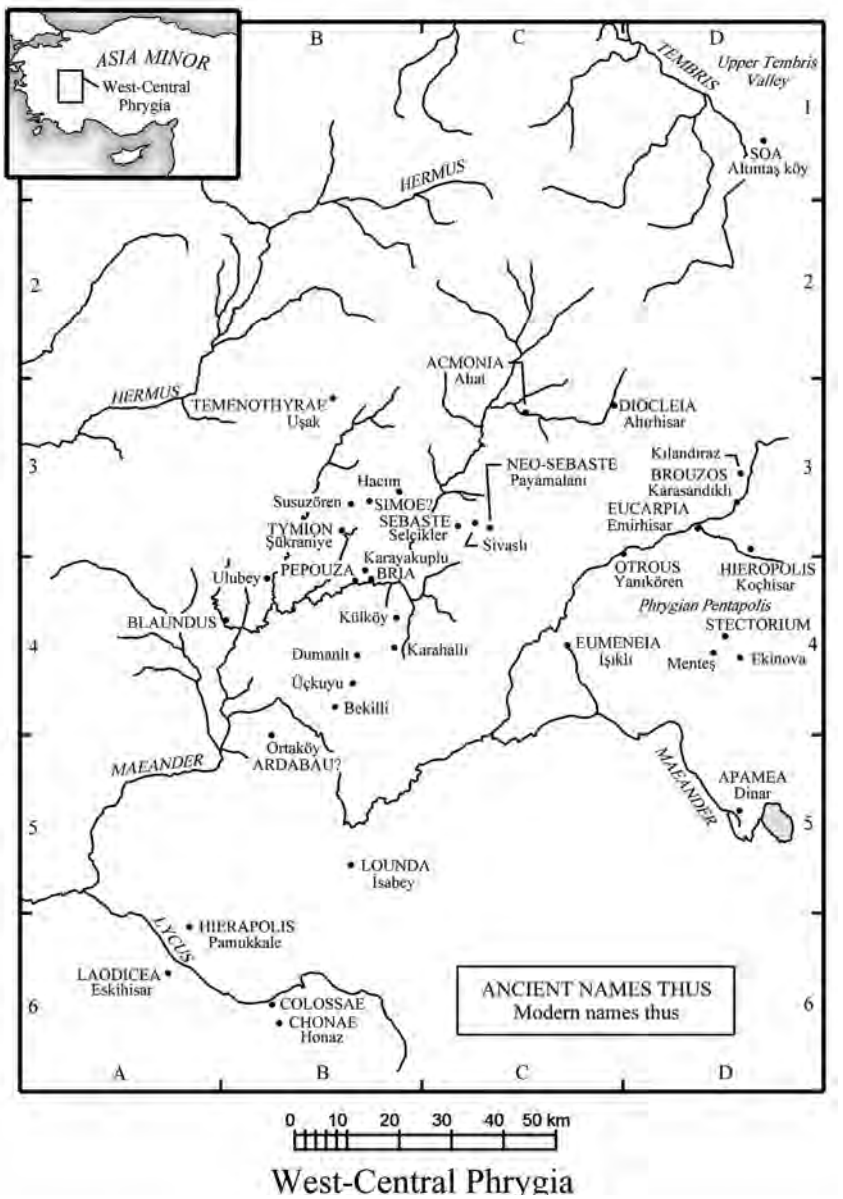

Figure 43.1 Map of west central Phrygia. Courtesy of William Tabbernee

Figure 43.2 Remains of a basilica bath converted to a church, Hierapolis. Photo Christine Trevett

If Maximilla was the last of the three to die, and she was dead by *c.* 180 CE, then 172–80 CE seems too short a time-span for the rise, expansion and condemnation of the New Prophecy. Its origins may indeed go back to the 150s (Trevett 1996; Hirschmann 2005; Tabbernee 2007; see too, Barnes 2010). Its significance would have become clear in the 160s (Trevett 1996). Asia provides evidence for the kinds of eschatological expectation which fuelled the New Prophecy (the revelation and Papias of Hierapolis, for example). Events of the 160s onward, including famine, warfare, occasional persecution, plague, may have been elements in that eschatological suffering (*ponos*) of which Maximilla spoke (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 48.13.1) when describing herself as revealer and interpreter of suffering, covenant and promise (Trevett 1997; Mader 2012).

This movement of renewal stressing spiritual gifts, increased rigour and the promises of God (*H.E.* 5.16.9 [Anonymous]; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 48.1.3; 48.13.1 [Maximilla]) spread beyond Phrygia and divided congregations of developing catholic kind (*H.E.* 5.16.4 [Anonymous]). Christian leaders from Otrous, Cumane, Hierapolis and Apamea challenged it (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.16.16; 5.19), as did others eastwards in Antioch as well as westwards in Thrace, where Priscilla was confronted (*H.E.* 5.19.1–3). Quickly it reached Rome and North Africa.

Claudius Apolinarius spearheaded opposition in Hierapolis (*H.E.* 4.27; 5.16.1; 5.19.2; cf. Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 26). The relics of some of Philip's daughters were there and the prophets claimed them as foremothers in prophecy.[5] Fourth-century and later epigraphy suggests a continued Montanist presence in Hierapolis as also in the Philadelphia region, home to Ammia and Quadratus (Calder 1923; Trevett 1996: 20–6; Tabbernee 1997a: 53–4, 495–511). The prophets claimed to be successors to them also (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.17.4).

Ardabau and Pepouza

Montanus first prophesied in a backwater somewhere in 'Phrygian-Mysia' (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.16.7 [Anonymous]), at a place known as Ardabau. Ardabau has not been located but Mitchell (2013: 169) thinks that plausibly it lay 'a little to the west or north-west of the modern city of Uşak, ancient Temenouthyrai' (Drew-Bear 1979; Mitchell 2013: 169–70). The area has yielded inscriptions which Tabbernee thinks 'likely' to be Montanist (1997a: 61–86).[6] Possibly the name Ardabau

had symbolic significance. A similar name features in 4 Ezra/2 Esdras 9:26 (Ardab: Latin, Armenian; Ardap in Syriac and other variants), as the site of a vision and appearance of the city of Zion (Preuschen 1900; Trevett 1996: 21–6; contrast Tabbernee 1997a: 18). Ardabau/'Ardabau' did not become the Prophecy's centre, however. Montanus identified Tymion and Pepouza as 'Jerusalem' places (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.18.2 [Apollonius and cf. Cyprian *Ep.* 75.10]; Epiphanius *Pan.* 49.1) and encouraged people to gather there, perhaps in expectation of descent of the promised Jerusalem (Kraft 1955) or perhaps for creating communities committed to the Prophecy's Christian lifestyle.

Pepouza became administratively and spiritually Montanism's centre. In the sixth century (*c.* 550 CE under Justinian 1), the soldiery of John of Ephesus destroyed its central shrine to the prophets and Montanist churches were confiscated. Pepouza was mentioned in sources not concerned with Montanism: when its orthodox ecclesiastical representatives went to the second Council of Nicea (787 CE) and to a synod in Constantinople (879 CE). Tymion, however, was known only from the single Eusebian anti-Montanist source.

Where were these places? Was Pepouza near Hierapolis, modern Pamukkale (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.19.1–4) or north-east/north-west towards Apamea or near Philadelphia (modern Alaşehir)? New Prophecy teaching echoed themes in the letter to Philadelphia which had the 'open door'

Figure 43.3 The Tymion inscription. Photo courtesy of William Tabbernee

before it (Revelation 3:7–13), and Quadratus and Ammia (*H.E.* 5.17.4) were linked with Philadelphia (Calder 1923; Trevett 1996: 20–6; Tabbernee 1997a: 53–4). Other Turkish towns and villages were mooted: Hocalar, Üçkuyu or Yanıkören (ancient Otrous), or perhaps Bekilli, Dumanlı, Uşak, Delihıdırlı and Karahallı.[7]

In July 2000 there emerged the first epigraphy mentioning Tymion (Latinised Tymium)[8]: an imperial rescript from the joint consulships of Antoninus Pius and Septimius Geta (perhaps their first, in 205 CE). A farmer had dug up this item while ploughing, for decades using it as a step at the entrance to his house until its deposit in the Uşak Archaeological Museum in 1998 (Tabbernee and Lampe 2008: 69).

It recorded the response to a local petition and in Latin mentioned the *coloni* of Tymium and Simoe. Tenants on settlements on an imperial estate had petitioned against their exploitation. It is probably contemporaneous with the anti-Montanist Apollonius.

The region is that of present-day Susuzören, west of Sebaste and south-east of Temenouthyrae (modern Uşak), farther north than scholars surmised. On the assumption that where Tymion was Pepouza could not be far away, an extensive site was soon identified southwards, which matched a variety of criteria for what was known of Pepouza. These included remoteness and in having signs of a Byzantine monastery (Tabbernee and Lampe 2008: 100–7, 251–3). This probable Pepouza lies *c.* 80 km east of Philadelphia and 'on almost exactly the same latitude' (Tabbernee 2007: 116–17).

Archaeological survey has identified a substantial Roman site. Though not wholly verified, there is growing confidence that Pepouza has been discovered. Tabbernee believes the evidence is 'overwhelming' (Tabbernee and Lampe 2008: 106). Table land stands between Tymion and the site now being excavated – the landing site, perhaps, for the promised Jerusalem (Rev. 3:12–13 [to Philadelphia]; Rev. 21; Epiphanius *Pan.* 49.1).

Its character

Prophesying had existed among Christians from the outset. Prophecy carried social and political significance and involved claims to authority (Potter 1990, 1995; Trevett 1996; Nasrallah 2003). Questions of authority were at the root of many of the disputes between catholic Christians and Montanists.

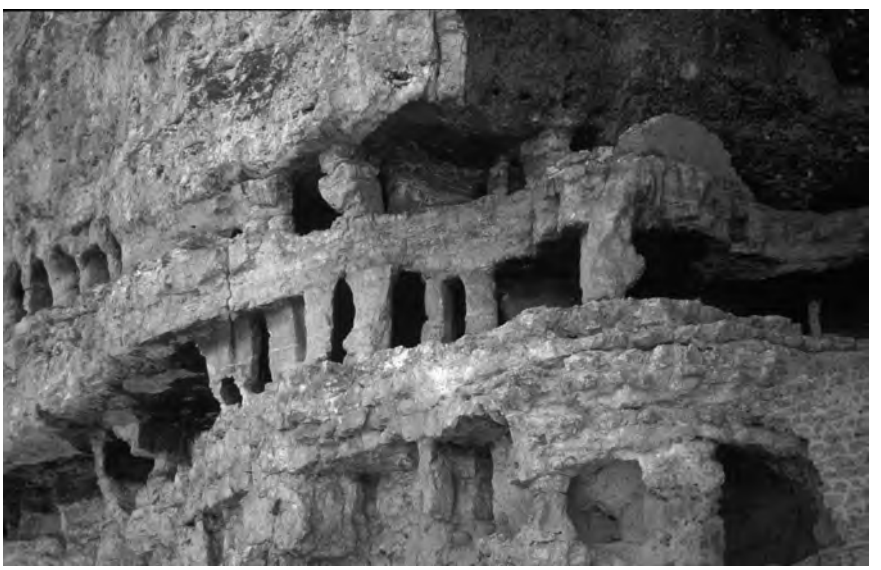

Figure 43.4 Remains of a Byzantine monastery, Pepouza. Photo courtesy of Peter Lampe and Bill Tabbernee; for a panoramic view of this site, see Figure 41.5

As the early prophecy spread, church leaders in Asia closed ranks. Its followers seceded from, or were rejected from, congregations. Yet 'Phrygians' shared catholic Christians' understanding of Father, Son and Holy Spirit according to Epiphanius, while also they argued (*Pan*. 48.1.4; 48.12.1) that 'We too must receive the spiritual gifts'. Such gifts lay behind their separation from catholic Christianity (Nasrallah 2003; Mader 2012: 41–57). Past commentators assumed that claims to charismatic authority versus developing institutional forms of authority explained the disputes (contrast Stewart-Sykes 2005), but institutional forms of authority were not foreign to Montanism. Pneumatology was certainly key to its claims, however, and to its rejection.

The New Prophets had appropriated to their own age the Johannine promise of the Paraclete[9] and fresh revelation. Tertullian saw the Paraclete promise fulfilled through them, with the Holy Spirit continuing the work of ethical renewal and with fresh leadings on discipline (Tabbernee 2007: 158–61). Those who rejected the New Prophecy's 'spiritual' Christians (Tabbernee 2001: 110–12, 2007: 418, 423) came to be labelled unspiritual 'psychics' (*psychici*), not least by Tertullian (*Iei*. 1.1; 3.1; 11.1; 16.8; *Pud*. 21–2; *Marc*. 4.22.5; *Mon*. 1.1; see too, Clement of Alexandria *Strom*. 4.13.93.1). Some 'spiritual' Christians figured in epigraphy at a later date (Tabbernee 1997a: 401–6, 544–6, 550–2).

Montanism's opponents saw matters differently. The original prophesying had involved ecstasy, irrationality and was contrary to the traditional Christian kind. Unbridled, noisy and accompanied by unintelligible speech (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.16.6–9 [Anonymous], perhaps glossolalia requiring interpretation[10]), they labelled such prophesying false, demonically-inspired, deceitful (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.16.4; 5.16.7–8; Epiphanius *Pan*. 48.1.4–5, 48.2.3, 5; Cyprian *Ep*. 75.10).

Prophecy and receipt of visions remained characteristic of Montanists nevertheless. Evidence from Tertullian, Origen, Firmilian, Epiphanius (*Pan*. 49.2.3–4) and others point to their continuation,[11] as perhaps does the stele for the fourth-century prophetess Nanas of Kotiaeion.[12] Notably, there was Quintilla, probably a third-century prophet. She left the legacy of the New Prophecy's most famous vision, received in Pepouza (either by her or Priscilla, Epiphanius said uncertainly: *Pan*. 49.1). Christ in female form had endowed her with wisdom and had spoken of Jerusalem descending at that place (Poirier 1999, cf. Sirach 24:11; Tabbernee 2012a). The Quintillian Montanist sub-sect (Epiphanius *Pan*. 48.14; 49.1–2; cf. 51.33; Augustine *De haeresibus* 27) took her name and continued to be interested in matters eschatological (Trevett 1995, 1996: 167–70; Elm 1996).

Post-Constantine, many accusations revolved around Montanus' alleged (and improbable) self-identification *as* the Paraclete, rather than as the mouthpiece of its revelation.[13] Catholics highlighted pneumatological wrong-thinking of that kind when they were arguing for the divinity of the Holy Spirit (Tabbernee 2012b). Now what had probably been declarations of the source and authority for Montanus' prophetic utterances ('I am . . . ') were being presented as his own self-glorifying claims, e.g. 'I am the Lord God Pantocratōr dwelling in man' (Epiphanius *Pan*. 48.11.1–7) and 'Neither angel nor envoy, but I the Lord God the Father have come' (Epiphanius *Pan*. 48.11; cf. Isa. 63.9).

Earlier sources suggested the prophets' conformity with 'mainstream' Christian thinking: they accepted the same scriptures (of both covenants) as other Christians and held the same view of Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the resurrection of the dead (*Pan* 48.1.3–4), just as Hippolytus wrote that they maintained the same views about Christ and the creator as did his co-religionists (*Refut. omn. haer.* 8.19; 10.25). Firmilian's letter to Cyprian described a probably Montanist female prophet evangelising and baptising in the 230s CE[14] and told of her using familiar Christian language of Trinitarian type and not diverging from the usual liturgy (Cyprian *Ep*. 75.10–11). Such common heritage apart though, for him she was a false prophet whose 'Cataphrygian' baptisms would be invalid (Trevett 1999a). A gathering of Asian bishops in Iconium had determined that re-baptism would be needed for turning to the catholic fold (Cyprian *Ep*. 75.7.1–4 cf. 75.19.4). Cataphrygians 'recognise the same Father and Son with us', Firmilian wrote (Cyprian *Ep*. 75.19). The bone of contention was the spirit.

Catholic opponents complained about innovations born of the Prophecy's revelation and about the questionable probity of its spokespersons. New Prophets collected and circulated the leaders' teachings. Themiso, a second-generation leader, had penned a general epistle (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.18.5).

In Rome there were references to their 'countless books' and 'new scriptures' (Hippolytus *Refut. omn. haer.* 8.19; Eusebius *H.E.* 6.20.3). In what was probably a war of words and writings, Eusebius' Anonymous hesitated to write against them lest he too be thought to be adding to the New Covenant writings (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.16.3). Others did write (Tabbernee 2007: 7–18). Concern about hermeneutics, plus the publicity accorded to the female prophets' teachings perhaps added fuel to the debate (Thomas 2003; Pastorelli 2008). Some have seen the New Prophecy's rise as a catalyst for the creation of a Christian canon.[15]

Yet little written by New Prophets/Montanists themselves has survived. Constantine and later imperial legislation ensured the destruction of their literature (Eusebius *Vita Const.* 3.66; Cod. Theod. xvi. 534) and almost all that is known about them derives from their opponents.

The Prophecy took a harder line on penance and absolution, remarriage and in prescribing more fasts and a dry diet (Trevett 2004, 2007; Ameling 2008; Pastorelli 2008). Tertullian, a rigorist by instinct, responded against accusations of innovation nevertheless: in essentials, the New Prophecy was restorative not innovative. The Paraclete brought teaching formerly deferred and a clear exposition of Scripture's meaning (John 16: 12–14; *Virg.* 1.4–7; *Mon.* 2.4 and see 2.2, 4.1; *Res.* 63). Its discipline was a *via media* between a catholic tendency to self-gratification and a gnostic or encratite hostility to the gifts of God, and New Prophets merely made obligatory what others left to choice. In the age of the Paraclete and of Christian maturity, believers could now choose to live according to the highest standards, Tertullian thought.[16]

Catholic accusations also related to money and possessions. Montanus organised collectors of contributions and Apollonius told of *salaried* people spreading the message (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.18.2). Men of good social standing and sound education were the public face of the churches (Stewart-Sykes 1999) and giving financial support to the New Prophecy's ambassadors might have empowered for ministry people of the lower orders, women among them perhaps. It would also have diverted money and gifts from catholic churches (Trevett 2011). Stephen Mitchell took Montanus', Prisca and Maximilla to have been 'from wealthy Phrygian families' (Mitchell 2013: 191, 194–5, citing a late fourth-century accusation by Jerome [*Ep.* 133.4 to Ctesipon]). Organised accumulation of money and other contributions pointed to 'excessive reliance on wealth and money', he suggested (Mitchell 2013: 192). I doubt this, but certainly Montanism's followers were not the poor alone. Later epigraphy testifies to loyalists in socio-economic groups which could afford tombstones and sarcophagi (Tabbernee 1997a: 564–9; Mitchell 2013).

Accounts bolstered by gossip and innuendo claimed that Montanus and Maximilla had died by suicide (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.16.13 [Anonymous]); that a certain Alexander and an unnamed female prophet were blameworthy (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.18.5–11 [Apollonius]); that Themiso, a confessor, bribed his way from prison (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.18.5 [Apollonius]); that Theodotus, who experienced heavenly ascents, had died as the result of an unspecified accident (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.16.4 [Anonymous]). Yet even the Anonymous would not vouch for the truth of such tales.

As it developed, Montanism retained and expanded officialdom. It should not be understood as a reaction against increased clericalisation in churches, for Jerome (*Ep.* 41 *Ad Marcellam*) told of a revised and larger Montanist order of clergy: a patriarch (only at Pepouza?), another new office of koinōnos beneath him (Tabbernee 2007: 372–3) in which Hirschmann (2005: 137–8, 143–4) discerned the influence of Phrygian paganism, and with bishops in third place. The tombstone of Praÿlios discovered *c.* 15 km from Philadelphia, is one of several items which refer to a koinōnos.

There were female as well as male bishops, presbyters and deacons (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 49.3; cf. John of Damascus, *De haeresibus* 87; Ambrosiaster, *Comm.* in *Ep. 1 ad Tim.* 3.8–11). Epiphanius knew that female roles might be defended by appeal to Miriam, Eve and Galatians 3:28 (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 49.2 [Quintillianists]) and that lamp-bearing virgins, dressed in white, prophesied during Quintillianist worship (*Pan.* 49.2.3–4). The tombstone from Ancyra of Stephania, 'one of the five lamp-bearing virgins' and their leader seems to support this (Mitchell 1997: 101 no. 49; Tabbernee 1997a: 518–25) just as other epigraphy confirms a range of Montanist personnel (see, e.g. Tabbernee 1997a: 509–18;

Hirschmann 2004: 160–7 [interpreting the Nanas inscription as that of a female bishop]; Mitchell 2005, 2013: 184–6). It was not unknown for women to hold office in churches (Eisen 2000; Madigan and Osiek 2005), though from the outset Montanist women as well as men were in the public eye.

Tertullian's conservative views on women seem to have remained largely unmodified, despite acknowledging and quoting Prisca and Maximilla. He described an orderly female visionary who did not impinge on the worship pattern of the church and who, despite ecstasy, visions, auditions and knowledge of healing, shared her insights after the service and in a less public context (*Anima* 9.4). Congregational prophecy, receipt of visions and even children speaking words of warning 'filled with the Holy Spirit and in ecstasy' (Trevett 1999a) were nevertheless realities in Carthage in Cyprian's day (Cyprian, *Ep.* 16.41).

Montanist zeal for martyrdom has often been over-estimated, possibly due to Tertullian's stance (*Fuga*; *Ad Martyras*) and given references to mass suicides in Montanism's death throes, when its followers were greatly pressurised (Procopius *Hist. arc.* 11.23; Theophanes *Chron.* AM 6214 [722 CE]; Turtledove 1982: 93). For Klawiter, persecution and its teaching on martyrdom had been key factors in the New Prophecy's rise and condemnation. He associated reverence for confessors' 'power of the keys' with Montanist women's clerical office (Klawiter 1975, 1980; contrast McGinn-Moorer 1989: 9–11; Trevett 1996: 190–5). Pre Constantine, some Montanists did suffer (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.16.20–22) and eagerness for death would not have been a novelty or peculiar to them (Powell 1975; Trevett 1996: 95–105, 121–9; Birley 2006) but on review of the evidence Tabbernee has discerned no substantial difference between Montanists and others in attitudes to martyrdom and flight in persecution (Tabbernee 2007: 167–260).

Expectation of the End had figured in the Prophecy's earliest teachings. It owed much to the kinds of ideas preserved in the book of Revelation, 4 Ezra and other sources (Trevett 1996: 95–105; Stewart-Sykes 1997, but note Hill 2001; Mitchell 2013: 194–6). Maximilla, who was probably the longest surviving of the three, predicted the end of prophecy and the End after her death. Neither a successor of note nor the promised End followed it (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.16.18–19; Epiphanius *Pan.* 48.2.4) and the movement accommodated. It did not abandon the expectation, though. In Book 11 of the *Chronicle*, Michael the Syrian gave an account of the sixth-century destruction of the reliquary and bones of the prophets in Pepouza. Montanists grieved and expected that the world was about to be destroyed (*Chron.* 9.33).

In many respects, the Prophecy had been more a determined and discomforting statement of emphases present already in Asian Christianity than something wholly novel (Aland 1955, 1960a; Trevett 1989). Opposition clarified and sharpened its distinctiveness, however. Pacian of Barcelona (in *Ep.* 1 *Ad Sympronianum* [PL 13.1053]) listed its dissenting views about repentance, apostolic and prophetic succession, 'the day of the Passover' (Quartodeciman in sympathy and see Sozomon *H.E.* 7.18.12–14), authoritative writings, the name 'catholic', and more. The evidence of Epiphanius, Augustine, Jerome and others suggests that millenarian ideology and respect for the ministries of women survived in later groups (Trevett 1995, 1999b; Elm 1996). Groups were now referred to by places of origin: Phrygians/Cataphrygians, Pepouzians, or by names recalling figures of the past: Priscillians, Quintillians, Montanists.

Aberrant Trinitarian theology was a recurring accusation against later Montanists and affinity with various brands of Monarchianism. Earlier though, in the third century, Hippolytus had recounted that one group among Roman Montanists had been influenced by the theology of Noetus (*Adv. omn. haer.* 8.19; 10.26; cf. later Theodoret, *Haereticarum fabularum compendium* 3.2 [PG 83, 401–4]). It seems unlikely that just decades after the Prophecy's beginnings, Tertullian (McGowan 2006) would have aligned himself with a group which *in general* held to such an understanding of God at that time.

Fragmentation and decline, persecution and seizure of its assets were factors in the eventual demise of the New Prophecy/Montanism, long after what De Labriolle (1913b) dubbed *La Crise Montaniste*.

Montanus, Priscilla, Maximilla

Jensen argued that Montanus should be seen as literally the 'advocate' (*paraklētos*) for the two females (Jensen 1996: 135–8) and that Priscilla had been the movement's leader. Her case does not convince, though the women seem to have been no less influential than Montanus. He was accused of lust for leadership (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.16.7 [Anonymous]), but the attributable prophetic sayings in early anti-Montanist sources and in Tertullian came mostly from the women (Trevett 1996: 159–62; Tabbernee 1997a: 19). Later writers did portray the women as spiritual dependants or lesser associates of Montanus. Indeed as Montanism joined lists of heresies, so Christian rhetoric turned the same women into madwomen and whores, or into the noble rich who had seduced Christian communities with money (*Chronicon Pascale* 240 [PG 92.641–44]; Timothy of Constantinople *De iis qui ad ecclesiam accedunt* [PG 86.20]; Jerome, *Ep.* 33.4 *Ad Ctesiphon*). Montanus' reputation fared no better. Such descriptions must be treated with caution, however.

The so-called 'oracles' of these three prophets[17] are in some cases only attenuated sayings or prophetic self-designation formulae. Stewart-Sykes (1999) regards lack of wordiness as evidence that sometimes a complete saying *has* been recorded, from what were rural types with little education. As preserved, though, mostly within hostile sources, sayings stand divorced from their original contexts, sometimes seeming to be a riposte in an extended but unpreserved debate. Mostly (Tertullian *Pud.* 21.7; *Fuga* 9.4; *Anima* 55.5 being exceptions), they are presented to seem ludicrous or evidence of hubris. In the past, scholars showed relatively little interest in their form, content and likeness to other prophetic work. That has changed.[18]

Montanus

Montanus had the Pauline *charism* of administration as well as being a teacher and prophet (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.18.2), orchestrating gatherings at Pepouza and Tymion, and organising a system for collections in money and kind (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.18.2; cf. 1 Cor. 12:28). One early anti-Montanist claimed he was a recent convert to Christianity (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.16.7) and later Jerome portrayed him as 'a castrated and emasculated man' (*ubscisum et semivirum*: [*Ep.* 41.4]), suggestive of devotion to the goddess Cybele. Alternatively, he was said to have been a priest of Apollo (the latter according to the *Dialexis* or *Debate of a Montanist and an Orthodox Christian* [Ficker 1905; Heine 1989a: 123; Berruto Martone 1999: 82–3, 156–7]).[19] Tabbernee and Lampe (2008: 4–5) are sympathetic to the latter claim. Yet had it been so, I would have expected the earliest opponents of Montanus to have seized on the fact.

Montanus' best-known utterance (paralleled elsewhere) suggests a context of debate about the nature of inspiration: 'Behold, man is like a lyre, and I flit about like a plectron; man sleeps, and I awaken him; behold it is the Lord who changes the hearts of men and gives men a heart' (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 48.4.1. Mader 2012: 190–8).

Priscilla

Tertullian called her Prisca, the non-diminutive form of the name, and wrote of her as a mouthpiece of the Paraclete (*Res.* 11.2). Some of her sayings are preserved in his work and some unattributed ones may be hers: about death by martyrdom being preferable to other deaths, such as pregnancy-related kinds, and in exhortation against fearing exposure to public gaze and praise (*Fuga* 9.4). Her parenetic words on those who ministered in holiness told of a church rightly guided by the 'spiritual' (*pneumatikos*) rather than 'psychic' individual: 'For purification produces harmony' and visions and auditions followed (Tertullian, *Cast.* 10.5). Her statement that 'they are flesh yet they hate the flesh' (Tertullian, *Res.* 11) may have originated in an anti-gnostic or anti-docetic context.[20]

Maximilla

For Epiphanius' early anti-Phrygian source, the names of these prophets spoke of their barbarous cradling (*Pan*. 48.12.3). Maximilla's death by *c*. 179–80 has come to be regarded as an important point of division between the original New Prophecy and subsequent developments. Epiphanius' anti-Phrygian wrote of her dismissively (*Pan*. 48.13.1) as allegedly a fount of exhortation (*parakalouthia*) and teaching (Mader 2012: 145–50, 186–9) but the saying, 'Do not hear me but hear Christ' (Epiphanius, *Pan*. 48.12.4) states her claim to being a prophetic mouthpiece.

Maximilla's utterances about eschatology and her interpretation of 'signs of the times' proved troublesome. The saying on being an interpreter of covenant and suffering has been noted already.

Figure 43.5 Saints Perpetua and Felicity. Icon by Br. Robert Lenz OFM, photo courtesy of Trinity Stores

She also predicted future wars and revolutions (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.16.18 [Anonymous]) and that 'After me there will no longer be a prophet but the end' (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 48.2.4). She was a focus for opposition and amid allegations of false prophecy and possession, female prophets (but no men in the surviving records) attracted the attention of exorcists. Maximilla and an unnamed later prophetess were so confronted (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.18.13; cf. 5.19.3; Cyprian *Ep.* 75 [Firmilian]; Trevett 1996: 153–8, 1999a).

Maximilla's best-known saying reflects these tensions in Asia Minor: 'I am driven away like a wolf from the sheep', she complained (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.16.17). 'I am not a wolf. I am word and spirit and power'. The language is reminiscent both of Matthew (7:15) and of Paul's words about his own power in weakness (1 Cor. 2:4).

Ultimately, Maximilla was the only one of the original prophets whose name was not appended to some form of the movement.

Montanism in North Africa

The New Prophecy of North Africa was a second phase of the movement. Carthage and the idiosyncratic Tertullian were significant (Schöllgen 1984; Robeck 1992; Rankin 1995). He had espoused the Prophecy by 207 CE. Far from being driven out, as had happened in Asia (Fischer 1974, 1977), its followers seem to have remained integrated in Carthage's congregations so that Powell (1975) wrote of a Montanist *ecclesiola in ecclesia*.[21]

The *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis* described martyrdoms in the year 203. The document was redacted by someone sympathetic to Montanism and in the past some believed that to have been Tertullian.[22] Writers are divided on whether the martyrs themselves, among them Perpetua, of good family, and the slave Felicitas, were of the New Prophecy. Perpetua's visions and dreams included being a male gladiator for Christ and receiving curds from a shepherd, suggestive of Artotyrites' practice mentioned in some later sources (Epiphanius *Pan.* 49.1–2 and Augustine *Haer.* 28). In the arena, Perpetua appeared 'in spirit and in ecstasy' (*Pass. Perp.* 20.8).

Post-Tertullian we know little of how loyalists of the Prophecy/Montanism stood in relation to catholic congregations. Augustine (*Haer.* 86) claimed that Tertullian had seceded both from Montanism and the catholic faith and had created his own 'Tertullianist' sect. Alternatively, 'Tertullianists' have been taken as simply synonymous with Montanists in Africa (Barnes 1971: 258–9; cf. Aland 1960b: 161–3; Powell 1975) or perhaps as a group post both Tertullian and Cyprian, a group which had left the catholic mainstream in Carthage (see Tabbernee 1997a: 475–6, 2007: 266–9). Praedestinatus (*Haer.* 1.86) claimed that 'Tertullianists' became catholic Christians in Augustine's time.

Augustine himself mentioned Cataphrygians, Quintillians and Pepouzians, but he probably had no direct experience of Montanist groups (Tabbernee 2007: 266–71), though he knew of their well-documented views on the Paraclete, digamy, etc. and of tales of bloody rites involving infants (*Contra Faustum* 32.17; *Haer.* 26–7, 86).[23] Decades earlier though, in the 360s CE, Optatus of Milevis in Numidia had said that there were no Montanists in Africa (*Schism. Donat.* 1.9.1). There were plenty of Donatists, and some Montanists may have slid sideways into their ranks.[24]

Tabbernee discussed epigraphy suggestive of Montanist presence there even to the sixth century. Some of it may be Donatist, he acknowledges, and reverence for north African martyrs who were called Montanus/Muntanus further clouds the issue (Frend 1980 [1940]; Tabbernee 1997a: 105–23, 444–51, 534–44).

Montanism in Rome

The New Prophecy, like most things, gravitated to Rome[25] and Asiatics were probably well-represented among its followers there. The claim by Praedestinatus that bishop Soter condemned Rome's 'Tertullianists' (*Haer.* 1.26; 1.86) is anachronistic, though the New Prophecy may have reached Rome during his leadership.

Tertullian (*Prax.* 1.5) claimed that one Roman bishop had recognised the New Prophecy and had penned letters of peace, before being persuaded against it by 'Praxeas' ('busybody'), an Asian anti-Montanist and modalistic Monarchian. Would the bishop have been Eleutherus (*c.* 174–189) or Victor (*c.* 189–199)? The former had received letters of embassy from confessing Christians in Gaul in 177 CE, such as were also sent to establish peace in churches in Asia and Phrygia (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.3.4). Tabbernee thinks the bishop's action related to Asian/Phrygian adherents of the Prophecy *in Rome* (Tabbernee 2007: 36–40) and that he was Victor. The debate between the 'Phrygian' Proclus and the Roman catholic Gaius (Eusebius *H.E.* 2.25.5–7; 3.28.2; 3.31.4; 6.20.3 cf. Pseudo-Tertullian, *Adv. omn. haer.* 7) is probably to be dated under bishop Zephyrinus, around the turn of the second and third centuries.

Heine took the prophets' teaching on the Paraclete to have been a *Roman* Montanist innovation (Heine 1987, 1989b), which does not convince.[26] Rome may have become a seat of opposition to Johannine writings, however. Gaius attributed the Johannine Gospel and the Apocalypse to Cerinthus, according to 'Hippolytus' (as cited by the twelfth-century Dionysius Barsalibi, *Comm. Apoc.* 1). Then in *Pan.* 51.3.1–2, Epiphanius made an association between the anti-Montanist Gaius and so-called 'Alogi' who rejected John's Gospel and the Apocalypse.[27] The New Prophets valued both writings, yet 'Alogism', if a response to them, might have stemmed from Asia or Rome. Tabbernee doubts that a verifiable group is being talked about and thinks that 'Alogi' may be a product of Epiphanius' imagination (Tabbernee 2007: 68–9).

Questions of authority (prophetic and apostolic) and heritage were in the air. Romans and Asiatics declared the merits and relics of their predecessors (Tabbernee 1997b) and defended their traditions (Eusebius *H.E.* 2.25.6–7; 6.20.3; cf. 3.31.2–5; 5.24). 'Hippolytus' (Brent 1995; Pastorelli 2008) wrote of Montanists' 'countless books' and of their reverence for women's utterances. It was in response to these, he wrote, that they had devised 'new feasts, fasts and the eating of dry food and cabbage' (*Refut. omn. haer.* 8.19).

Montanists survived longer in the east. Rome excepted, they had probably disappeared in the west by the end of the fourth century (contrast in the east, Sozomen *Hist. eccl.* 2.32.5; Theodoret *Haer.* 3.6). Tabbernee argued for a thriving community in Rome, especially in the region of the Via Aurelia and with the likes of the Galatian Ablabes, a *pneumatikos* ('spiritual' Christian) buried there.[28] Epigraphy suggests they would have survived the fourth century (Tabbernee 1997a: 452–62, 544–7), and Jerome sought to arm the Roman Marcella with theological ammunition against their teachings (*Ep.* 41.1).

Honorius the western emperor (393–423) passed legislation against Montanists among others, and ordered the burning of books (*Cod. Theod.* 16.5.34; 16.5.40; 16.5.43), and under bishop Innocent I (402–17) some Cataphrygians were exiled to an unnamed monastery (*Liber Pontificalis* 57.1–2).

What writers have said about Montanism

McGinn-Moorer (1989), Trevett (1996), Tabbernee (1997a, 2007) and Doherty (2011) reflect on trends in scholarship and historiography. The *Christian* and more specifically *Asian* Christian characteristics of the early New Prophecy have often been highlighted.[29] Since Arnold in the seventeenth century, the New Prophecy has sometimes been seen as an attempt to stem secularisation in the churches (De Soyres 1878; Bonwetsch 1881; Von Harnack 1883), others stressing a struggle of prophetic power against that of the increasingly entrenched clerical kind. Women's roles have figured in many studies of Montanism.[30] Its indebtedness (or otherwise) to Phrygian paganism has been explored regularly, since the writing of August Neander, e.g. by Ramsay (1895–7), by Klawiter (1975: 129–41; cf. Ramelli 2005) who noted parallels between descriptions of Montanus and the language and ideas of Lucian's satire of Alexander of Abonuteichos (similarly active in the 160s) and with varying conclusions by Schepelern (1929), Hirschmann (2005) and others who touched on local influences.[31]

Prophets were no novelty in Asia Minor (Mitchell 1993; Huttner 2013 on the Lycus valley) but for this writer, as others, Montanism was not an alliance with Phrygian paganism generally and the cult of Cybele in particular. It had no deep roots in paganism (Mitchell 1993: II. 40), despite 'a few interesting parallels' between some of its characteristics and native pagan practices (Tabbernee 2007: 421–2).

Was Montanism a Jewish Christian phenomenon or a product of competing trajectories of Pauline Christianity (McGinn-Moorer 1989)? Did it emerge from conflicts of culture, nationalism or a revolt of the 'rural uneducated' (Frend 1980, 1988a, 1988b; Stewart-Sykes 1999)? Such questions figured. Increasingly, though, scholarship moved to examination of primary data rather than positing overarching historical schema. The body of epigraphy grows and is being (re)assessed (Mitchell 1993, 2013; Tabbernee 1997a). Studies of religion in Asia Minor continue (Mitchell 1993; Mitchell and Van Nuffelen 2010; Huttner 2013). Twenty-first century research is reaping the benefits of the digital age and of international scholarly co-operation (Breytenbach 2011; Markschies 2011).

Notes

1Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.16.4; cf. 14 (Anonymous); 5.11.2 (Serapion of Antioch).

2*Adversus Marcionem* 3.24.4; 4.22.4; *De resurrectione carnis* 63.9; *Adversus Praxean* 30.5; *De monogamia* 14.4.

3See Jerome, *Ep.* 84.4; Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.13.7; Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2.18. Also Sozomen, *H.E.* 2.32.2; Eusebius, *Vita Const.* 3.64–5; Canon 8 of the Council of Laodicea; *Codex Theod.* 16.

4Tabbernee discusses ecclesiastical and state opposition *c.* 165–324 CE and *c.* 324–550 (2007: 1–124, 263–388).

5See *H.E.* 5.17.2–3 (Alcibiades but Miltiades is intended) cf. too Origen, *Catenae* (Heine 1989a: 99); Didymus, *Trin.* 3.41.3; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 49.2.

6On Ardabau Strobel (1980: 38–49), Mitchell (1984: 226–7), Trevett (1996: 19–26), Tabbernee (1997a: 18, 53) and Hirschmann (2005: 50–1). Another suggested site, near Ortaköy, is under a reservoir (Tabbernee 2007: 5 n. 8).

7Calder (1931), Strobel (1980), Markschies (1994), Tabbernee (1997a: 27–8, 359, 477), Tabbernee and Lampe (2008: 15–29, 39–44).

8See Lampe (2002, 2004), Lampe and Tabbernee (2004), Tabbernee and Lampe (2008: 50–74), Hauken *et al.* (2003).

9Epiphanius' Anonymous in *Pan.* 48.11.5–6; Hippolytus, *Refut. omn. haer.* 8.19; Tertullian, *De anima* 55.5; *De virginibus velandis* 1.8 and 10; *De res. carn.* 11.2; Pseudo-Tertullian, *Adv. omn. haer.* 7; Origen, *Princ.* 2.7.3; Didymus, *De trinitate* 3.41.1 and also Tabbernee (2001), Wilhite (2013).

10 See Von Campenhausen (1969: 18), Ash (1976), Burghardt (1979), McGinn-Moorer (1989: 3–6), Trevett (1996: 90–1) and Tabbernee 2007: 92–8.

11 Firmilian of (Cappadocian) Caesarea to Cyprian in Carthage (Cyprian, *Epistula* 75 [74 in some editions]) dates from the 250s CE (Trevett 1999a) and comments on a prophesying woman and those 'who are called Cataphrygians and attempt to employ new prophecies' (*Epistula* 75.7).

12 Discussed by Trevett (1999b), Eisen (2000), Poirier (2001), Hirschmann (2004), Tabbernee (2007: 375–6).

13 Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.* 16.8; Pseudo-Jerome, *Haer.* 9; Augustine, *Bon. viduit.* 4.6; Theodoret, *Haer.* 3.1. See Pelikan (1956: 102–4), De Soyres (1878: 68–75), Trevett (1996: 214–23) and Tabbernee (2001, 2007: 119–24, 377–83).

14 On this woman, Trevett (1999a), Tabbernee (2007: 80), *pace* Jensen (1996: 182–6), Eisen (2000: 72, 87).

15 For discussion, see Goodspeed (1926: 67, 78–9), Walls (1964), Paulsen (1978), Robeck (1987 cf. also Denzey 2001), Thomas (2003), Marjanen (2005), Tabbernee (2007: 106–110) and Pastorelli (2008).

16 Tertullian, e.g. *Virg.* 1.5 and 8; *Res.* 11; *Mon.* 2.1.4 and 10; 15.1–3; *De pudicitia* 1; *De exhortatione castitatis* 6.2; *De ieiunio* 15.

17 Sayings of the three appear in a number of collections of Montanist *Testimonia*, sometimes enumerated differently (Trevett 1996: 248–9, after Froehlich 1973: 96), including De Labriolle (1913a), Heine (1989a), Huber (1985: 218–22) and Aland (1960a).

18 See Blanchetière (1978, 1979), Aune (1983), Groh (1985), Forbes (1986), Elm (1994), Trevett (1996), McGinn-Moorer (1997), Stewart-Sykes (1999), Mader (2012).

19 Strobel (1980: 34–8, 45); Trevett (1996: 8–10, 77–9); Berruto Martone (1999: 82–3, 156–7); Hirschmann (2005: 40, 117–19). Hirschmann points to the interrelation of the cults of Apollo and Cybele in the region of Phrygia concerned.

20 Montanism's relations with Gnosticism figure with differing emphases and conclusions in Neander (1842–47), Davies (1955), Froehlich (1973) and Denzey (2001).

21 See Lawlor (1908), Robeck (1992), Van der Lof (1991), Rankin (1995) and Tabbernee (1997a: 54–5, 142).

22 On Tertullian and the *Passio* see Trevett (1996: 176–84), Tabbernee (1997a: 57–9), Butler (2006: 49–58), Markschies (2012) and Kitzler (2015: 29–34).
23 See Augustine, *Haer.* 26–7; cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 48.14–15 and also Trevett (1995), Elm (1996) and Tabbernee (2007: 266–71) for discussion of Augustine and Montanism.
24 In other times and places some Montanists may have moved to the rigorist Novatianists rather than conform to orthodoxy (Tabbernee 2007: 396–7; Hirschmann 2008, 2015).
25 See Klawiter (1975: 191–243), La Piana (1925), Lampe (2003) and Trevett (1996: 55–66).
26 See variously, Trevett (1996: 62–6); Stewart-Sykes (1997: 482–30); Pastorelli (2008); Seim (2010).
27 See De Labriolle (1913a: lxxii–lxxiii), Bludau (1925), Paulsen (1978: 25–7), Heine (1987, 1989b) and Trevett (1996: 139–41).
28 Tabbernee (1997a: 452–6). See too pp. 456–62 and 544–7 for similar Roman inscriptional material of this period.
29 See Kraft (1955), Aland (1955, 1960a), McGinn-Moorer (1989), Trevett (1996), Tabbernee (1997a) and Stewart-Sykes (1999).
30 Examples are Fiorenza (1983: 300–3), Huber (1985), McGinn-Moorer (1989: 276–329), Jensen (1996) and Trevett (1996).
31 See Freeman (1950), Strobel (1980), Daunton-Fear (1982), Frend (1988b) and Elm (1996).

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44
DONATISM

Jakob Engberg

Introduction: Victor's perspective, Christianity in North Africa

In 303 CE, the emperor Diocletian initiated a persecution of the Christians in the Roman empire. One edict followed another, and the Great Persecution, as it became known, was continued by (some of) Diocletian's co-emperors and successors until 311 and 313. Some co-emperors and successors and some of their provincial governors proved zealous, while others were reluctant – in Africa the persecutions effectively came to a halt in 305.

This persecution, and Christian responses to it, resulted, like the persecutions in the mid third century, in strife and schisms between Christians. One of these schisms, the Catholic-Donatist, divided the Church in Africa for more than a century and with effects lasting into the seventh century and beyond. The two sides in this conflict both claimed to be Catholics and labelled their opponents (among other things): *pars Donati* and *filii Caeciliani*. I will for purely pragmatic reasons use the terms Donatist and Catholic to designate the two factions.

This chapter will introduce the main sources to the Catholic-Donatist schism. It will subsequently discuss its origin and outline its history with an emphasis on confrontation. Following this, I will discuss to what extent the Donatists and Catholics were in debate with each other and saw a need to protect their own communities from the influence of protagonists from the other party. This discussion paves the way for a discussion of what have been seen in scholarship as the key issues in the schism.[1]

Most of the chapter will deal with strife among Christians in fourth- to early fifth-century Africa. There was, however, much more to church life (and Donatism) in Africa in the fourth-fifth centuries than strife. An anecdotal piece of evidence derived from a source relating one of the dramatic episodes in this strife may remind us of that.

The Donatist bishop Silvanus had been one of the accusers of the Catholic bishop of Carthage, Caecilian. Silvanus himself was in 320 brought to trial and exiled.[2] During the proceedings, the Donatist grammarian, Victor from Cirta, gave testimony. Questioned about the origin of the schism, he replied (Optatus, *App.* 1.1):

> I cannot be fully acquainted with the origin of the dispute, since our city has always had one church, and if it ever had a dispute, we are totally unaware of it.[3]

Victor is testifying in a court case where he might fear to be implicated. He has reason to appear ignorant and to offer an apology. However, when Victor could claim such ignorance, many other Christians were likely also caught up in a conflict where they followed their family, their *pater familias*, their neighbours, their leaders or their clerics into whatever camp they opted for, many of them barely noticing the schism for years. In time, however, many such Christians would also be affected and prompted to take sides.

Victor's testimony exemplifies the fact that many fourth-century African Christians could have lived much of their lives without giving much thought to the schism or to its consequences. They likely considered themselves simply Christians. In many places there would only have been one community and no need for identity markers. Other Christians would in due course have grown up in areas, villages, towns or cities with two communities, but would have taken this as a fact of life.[4]

For most of the chapter I will leave 'Victor's perspective' and such 'normality' aside and focus on the Catholic-Donatist schism. From Victor's perspective, one could have written either an article on 'African Christianity' (emphasizing aspects peculiar to Christianity in an African form) or on 'Christianity in Africa' (emphasizing developments in Africa that followed or influenced developments elsewhere).[5]

Sources

The cliché that 'history is written by the winners' is to some degree confirmed by the preserved sources for the Catholic-Donatist schism.[6] Catholic sources dominate. This dominance has until recently been compounded, first, by a widespread scholarly tendency to ignore the relatively few Donatist sources available to us and, second, by a widespread tendency for scholars to be unsympathetic towards the Donatists.

Two aspects of the Donatist-Catholic schism have left their clearest marks in the preserved sources: first, the violence of both sides, the instances where force was utilized against the Donatists, the occasionally violent Donatist resistance to such oppression, the instances where Donatists encroached on the rights or property of a Catholic minority,[7] and the instances where social and religious unrest mingled to produce outbursts of violence; and, second, the vivid polemic, theological controversy and debate that raged externally between Catholics and Donatists and internally in both camps. Each side tried to blame the other for violence and claim for themselves the label of Catholics, the right interpretations of scripture, and the true inheritance from Cyprian. The Donatists blamed the Catholics for the authorities' persecutions and prided themselves in their martyrs, while the Catholics argued that it was not dying per se that created the martyr, but dying for and in Christ – and here, in their view, the Donatists did not qualify.

The relevant sources are scattered, but modern collections, editions and translations provide access to the most frequently cited evidence.[8]

From the Catholic side, the most important sources were written by the bishops Optatus and Augustine. Optatus wrote in the 360s to 380s a polemic work in seven books against the Donatists.[9] He frequently argued against a now lost work of the Donatist bishop of Carthage, Parmenian.[10] Optatus' importance is enhanced by his provision of a collection of ten documents from the early history of the schism. Most of these documents are letters of Constantine or his magistrates, but there is also a letter from the bishops gathered for the conference in Arles.

There is no indication that the Donatist-Catholic schism impressed Augustine in his youth.[11] Soon after his ordination, and as a priest and bishop, he engaged himself in writing more than a score of anti-Donatist tracts.[12] Many of these were written in response to Donatist writings, while others were written without such prompting.[13] Further, several of his letters and sermons address the Donatist controversy either as the main issue, or an issue mentioned in passing. Finally, some of his biblical commentaries also explicitly or implicitly confront Donatists.[14]

Donatism was thus a major concern to Augustine. It is, however, clear that not all of Augustine's time was consumed by this conflict. Indirectly, through Optatus and Augustine, it may be seen that they had opponents on the Donatist side with whom they were in debate. These Donatist protagonists are primarily known to us for their role in the Catholic-Donatist controversy and mostly through what Optatus or Augustine reveals. Here the example of Augustine and the perspective of Victor should make it clear that these Donatist champions would likely have had other concerns.

A few examples of Donatist writing focused on issues other than the controversy with the Catholics are preserved: first, Tyconius' *Book of Rules* (*Liber regularum*) laying out seven rules for scriptural exegesis that influenced Augustine.[15] Tyconius also wrote a commentary on Revelation (of which fragments are preserved) and two other works (known only by their title). Second, a work from the early fifth century (*Liber genealogus*) discussing the genealogies of Matthew and Luke and culminating with a summary of the persecution of Christians up to and including Honorius' persecution of the Donatists in 405. Third, a few martyr-stories describing events under the Great Persecution and identified as Donatist because of anti-Catholic polemic; among these are *The Acts of the Abitinian Martyrs*. In this text, Mensurius, the bishop of Carthage, is blamed for handing over scriptures and for preventing, with his deacon Caecilian, Christians from bringing provisions to the imprisoned confessors.[16] None of these texts has anti-Catholic polemic as their chief agenda. This testifies to Victor's perspective, i.e. that fourth to fifth-century Donatists were concerned with other issues besides the Catholic-Donatist schism.

The other preserved Donatist writings are more directly related to the conflict. *The Passion of Maximian and Isaac* and *The Passion of Marculus* both deal with the Marcarian persecution in the mid fourth century, while a sermon (*Sermo Donati*) from around 317–321 deals with the early repressions.[17]

Figure 44.1 Cresconia's tomb in Ammaedare in Byzacena, in situ in the floor of the sixth-century Basilica of Mellus. As with the vast majority of Christian inscriptions, tombs and churches, nothing marked Cresconia as either Catholic or Donatist. Christians in Ammaedare had been represented at the Council of Carthage of 255 and had sent both a Catholic and Donatist bishop to the Conference of Carthage in 411. Photo R. M. Jensen

Church Councils and the minutes from the Conference of Carthage in 411 provide another valuable perspective on the schism. In some cases, we know of only the number of bishops attending; in others we know names and where they came from; in yet others (most importantly the Conference of Carthage), central decisions or even most of the deliberations are preserved.[18] The last-mentioned source is unique. Catholics, Donatists and officials took great care to ensure that the words of the speakers were accurately recorded in the minutes.[19]

There is a strong tradition for using epigraphy and archeological evidence in the study of the Catholic-Donatist schism.[20] The epigraphic evidence includes anything from stylish inscriptions carved or set in mosaic to the crudest carvings on boulders. Remains of thousands of churches, from grand basilicas (more than 300) to humble chapels and found in cities, towns, villages, on estates and at pilgrimage-sites have been identified.[21] Some have preserved baptismal pools, tombs, mosaics, inscriptions, etc. Of artefacts, some preserved everyday objects such as tableware, lamps, seals, etc. were adorned with Christian symbols or motives. Such material evidence is crucial for understanding Christianity in Africa,[22] but it is questionable whether the material provides much direct information on the Catholic-Donatist schism, since very little material is identifiable as either Donatist or Catholic.

The origin of the Catholic-Donatist schism

A distinction should be drawn between the origin of Donatism and the origin of the Catholic-Donatist split. Rather than seeing Donatism as a new schism, it is more accurate to see a pre-schism (African) Christianity that then split and emerged as two distinct branches that could (and did) lay equal claim to being traditional and rooted in history, scriptures and doctrines that both branches considered authoritative.

The origin of the split was connected to the Great Persecution. As such, its history reaches back to 303 and beyond. The split only emerged, however, with the ordination (sometime between 307 and 311) of Caecilian as the successor of Mensurius as bishop of Carthage.[23]

The Great Persecution resulted, as earlier persecutions, in arrests, confiscations, tortures, imprisonments, mutilations, exiles, confessions and martyrdoms, but also in different degrees of apostasy, compromise and collaboration.[24] As in other provinces, and as under earlier persecutions, there emerged different Christian positions on how to handle collaborators and apostates. Clerics who were compromised, but had continued in office, presented a particular problem. What was the status of those who had been baptized or ordained by such compromised clerics? Was their ordination or baptism valid (such as had been in the mid third century the position of the bishop of Rome), or was it invalid and were the baptized required to undergo a new baptism (such as had been the position of Cyprian)? One edict had required Christians to hand over their scriptures to the authorities. A Christian who obliged came to be designated a *traditor*, 'the one who had handed over'. Caecilian's opponents alleged that one of the bishops who had ordained him was a *traditor* and that this rendered Caecilian's ordination illegitimate.

A simple explanation of the origin of the schism would be to say that Donatists took a harsh position, demanding tough penance prior to re-admittance to communion, banning compromised clerics from being re-admitted to office and refusing to recognize the ordinations and baptisms performed by them after their lapse; whereas the Catholics would be more lenient in their demands. While such an explanation has merit,[25] it is overly simplifying. First, the debate of the mid third century shows that both positions were traditionally present in the (African) church. Second, there is evidence that the Donatists too were willing to forgive and recognize less than ideal baptisms and ordinations, while the Catholics on their side also regarded apostasy as a serious offence requiring penance and were unwilling to accept Donatist ordinations.[26] Third, while the ordination of Caecilian was challenged early on with the argument that one of the bishops who had ordained him was a *traditor* and that his ordination was thus invalid, the initial Catholic defence indicates that this line of reasoning

was not foreign to them. The Catholic defence centred on proving the innocence of this bishop (a *controversia facti*).[27] There is not a trace of the claim being made by any contemporary Catholic that the whole question was inconsequential, since the ordination or baptism performed by a lapsed cleric remained valid. This argument from silence carries weight since Optatus and Augustine had access to documents from the early years of the schism, and it would have been strange for them to silence such an argument had it been made by the first Catholic protagonists, because it corresponded to their own arguments. The image of uncompromising (or untainted) Donatists and forgiving (or tainted) Catholics has much to do with the identity-formation and othering of both the communities over against each other developing in the decades following the split and relatively little to do with the initial split.[28]

In the dispute over the origin of the split, the Catholics and Donatists offered alternative explanations of the root causes of why Caecilian's ordination was challenged and Maiorinus ordained against him. According to Optatus, several persons conspired against Caecilian for personal and reprehensible reasons.[29] First, a wealthy woman, Lucilla, had been rebuked by Caecilian while he was a deacon for her excessive devotion to a martyr's bone, a rebuke that enraged her. Second, two local Christians, Botrus and Celestius, had both coveted to be bishops of Carthage. They had tried to increase their chances by conspiring to ensure that no Numidian bishops would take part in the ordination. With Caecilan's election their hopes were frustrated. Third, Mensurius had entrusted a group of seniors with church riches. They treated these riches as 'prey', so when Caecilian took office and demanded back the treasures, they too opposed him. Lucilla, Botrus, Celestius and the seniors withdrew from communion and Optatus concludes:

> The schism of that time, then, was brought forth by the anger of a humiliated woman, nourished by ambition, strengthened by avarice.[30]

The main blame is laid on Lucilla as seductress. Secundus, the bishop of Tigisis in Numidia, was summoned and arrived with other Numidian clerics whom Optatus labelled as collaborators with the authorities during the persecutions. In Carthage they were housed with the conspirators and manipulated to disown Caecilian and ordain Maiorinus, who was allegedly a member of Lucilla's household. Augustine and Jerome also blame Lucilla for having conspired against Caecilian.[31]

While it is not unlikely that women could exert influence on the election of bishops, there is no way of knowing whether it was the case in the election of Maiorinus. Further, while it is likely that some women and men would have pursued selfish goals in relation to elections of bishops, there is no way of knowing whether those who opposed Caecilian were thus motivated. It is however clear that there were good reasons for some to oppose his ordination. From Optatus we see that the ordination of Caecilian without the participation of Numidian bishops was somehow improper. Optatus is admitting this by placing the blame for their absence on Botrus and Celestius. Further, the Donatists alleged of Mensurius and Caecilian that they had prevented provisions from being brought to imprisoned confessors during the persecution, causing some to starve. According to a letter of Mensurius written to Secundus (a letter discussed at the Conference of Carthage), Mensurius did prevent provisions from being brought to prison (the defence was not conducted as a *controversia facti*). This action was justified by alleging that some of the prisoners were ordinary criminals or debtors who were unjustly profiting from such provisions (a *controversia generis*).[32] Thus, Mensurius and his deacon Caecilian did on Mensurius' own admission and as alleged in *The Acts of the Abitinian Martyrs*, prevent provision of Christian prisoners.[33] Mensurius and Caecilian's motives are, however, puzzling. Frend argued that Mensurius and Caecilian pursued a policy of discouraging veneration of martyrs, and that this act brought their policy to its logical conclusion.[34] Tilley suggests that Mensurius and Caecilian were overzealously obeying a law promulgated by the emperor Licinius according to which it was forbidden to bring supplies to prisoners who had been sentenced to death by starvation.[35] Whatever the motives, it is easy to understand that the ordination as bishop

of a person who was considered partly responsible for the plight and death of a number of confessors provoked an outrage that resulted in the election of a rival bishop.[36]

An outline of the history of the schism with an emphasis on violence

The (not unheard of) anomaly of two rival bishops in one city might have remained a local nuisance. In the present case, and with the conflict emerging in Carthage, other bishops were prompted to take sides, and the cleavage widened and spread.[37] Constantine's policy of compensating the church for property destroyed and confiscated by his predecessors and his subsequent policy of financial support for churches and legal privileges for clergy might have been, in this African context, an Apple of Discord. The support was forwarded to Caecilian and reserved for Catholics and this may have prompted the Donatists to approach the emperor.[38] In any case, a number of Donatist bishops petitioned Constantine and asked him to appoint judges from Gaul, because of, in their words, 'dissensions between us and other bishops'. The letter as quoted by Optatus has an open agenda, but according to a preserved letter from Constantine to Rome's bishop Miltiades, where Constantine calls the council, accusations against Caecilian is a central concern.[39] The case was tried in Rome in 313 by a council of fifteen Italic and Gallic bishops and Miltiades.[40] They pronounced Caecilian innocent and Donatus guilty of re-baptisms and re-ordinations – ordinations performed by the opponents of Caecilian were, however, declared valid. The Donatist bishops appealed and the case was heard again in Arles by a council of Gallic bishops, with the council pronouncing Caecilian innocent and condemning his opponents.[41] The Donatists appealed a second time, Constantine dispatched two bishops to Africa and finally in 316 Constantine heard the case at his court and ruled in favour of Caecilian.[42] That Constantine recognized these repeated appeals has been interpreted as a wavering attitude, diligence in seeking the most just verdict, or an attempt to bring stability to Africa; perhaps he just liked the fact that the repeated appeals and cases kept troublemakers out of Africa.[43]

As a result of Constantine's rulings in favour of Caecilian and of a subsequent persecution a number of Donatists were exiled in the years up to 321.[44] Meanwhile in Africa, the first blood was drawn in 315, and violence continued on and off in the following years.[45] It is unclear whether the violence was provoked or fuelled by a number of edicts issued by Constantine. One Donatist martyr-text suggests this, as do a number of passages in Augustine and the Theodosian Code.[46] Alternatively Caecilian and other Catholic bishops simply took courage from the imperial backing and persuaded local and regional Roman authorities to provide troops to seize Donatist church property, while the Donatists (on occasions violently) resisted. There survive two letters from Constantine written in 313 and 314, one to Caecilian, the other to Catholic bishops in Africa. Both letters state that Caecilian and these bishops could expect support from Constantine in any strife with deranged persons who were endangering the peace. This, along with the rulings from Rome and Arles, might have given such courage.[47] In any case, violence ensued and resulted most notoriously in the clubbing to death by Roman soldiers of a number of Donatists gathered for worship.[48] In an anonymous Donatist sermon from around 317–321, the preacher frowned at Caecilian's followers, who were responsible for the defilement of virgins, slaughter of priests, assaults and pillage, the corruption of holy discipline, and the violation of the chastity of faith. The violence failed however to bring the Donatists into the Catholic camp. In 321, with war with Licinius imminent, Constantine recalled the Donatist clerics from exile. Constantine seems to have resolved that the coexistence of two rival communities in Africa was better than continuous and fruitless turmoil.[49] Constantine's attitude to the Donatists was, according to a letter he wrote in 324, still hostile.[50] Similarly, Donatists were not given back confiscated property, neither were their clerics given the same immunity from municipal duties as their Catholic 'colleagues'.[51]

Constantine's reversal of policy appears successful. The following years were likely relatively tranquil, with both factions accommodating themselves to the existence of the other. The decades were not without incident, and in some of these the Donatists seem, in spite of continued imperial support

for the Catholics, to have held the upper hand, with for example Catholic clergy being forced to shoulder municipal burdens.[52] Evidence to adduce the relative (numerical) strength and geographic spread of the two communities is however insufficient for any coherent picture.[53]

Continued religious strife, however, fuelled and was fuelled by other conflicts. From the year 340, our sources begin to mention a loosely defined group called the Circumcellions.[54] The movement was associated with farmhands, debtors, displaced farmers, etc. According to the always hostile sources, Circumcellions would roam the countryside, plunder travellers and prevent creditors from exacting payments. So far, the descriptions do not differ from descriptions of poorly armed bands in other provinces. Our sources, however, further allege an affinity between Circumcellions and Donatists. It is reasonable to assume that the Circumcellions, being Christians, would have found identity in the confrontation between Donatists and authorities and the ideology of martyrdom – the Circumcellions were alleged to desire a violent death at the hand of any magistrate.[55] It is equally likely that Donatist clerics in times of confrontations with authorities or Catholics would have found it opportune to appeal to the Circumcellions – their existence made it difficult for the authorities to control the lands. The relationship was, however, never easy. The Donatist church, even more so than the Catholic, because of the absence of imperial patronage, depended on the support of wealthy Africans, the very segment of the population which had most to lose from Circumcellion activities.[56] Our sources suggest, not unreasonably, that Donatist clerics oscillated between encouraging and chastising Circumcellions.[57] On occasions, Donatist clerics would even call upon soldiers for protection against agitated Circumcellions.[58] Do such loose connections and such overlapping (and conflicting) ideological and practical interests of Donatists and Circumcellions make the Donatist church a social-political movement in disguise or the Circumcellions a band of religious terrorists? Not likely. It rather shows that a century-long and violent religious conflict was bound to be intermingled with other conflicts.

In the mid 340s, Donatus was still bishop in Carthage, while Gratus had replaced the deceased Caecilian. In 346 Donatus petitioned the emperor Constans and requested that he should be recognized as the sole bishop of Carthage.[59] Constans might have seen this as a chance for compromise and unification. In early 347, he dispatched two emissaries, Macarius and Paul, to Africa. They brought with them funds to help the needy and adorn churches. The mission ended in the most violent and infamous oppression of the Donatists.[60] Soon after arriving in Carthage, Macarius and Paul showed sympathy for the Catholics and tried to persuade Donatists into communion with Catholics.[61] The Donatists were alarmed and it was rumoured that Macarius had brought images to the altar. In this climate, Macarius travelled into Numidia under military escort. The violence that followed was an embarrassment for many Catholics. Optatus offered an apology and argued that the violence resulted from unfounded Donatist rumours and fear. Optatus wrote:

> At first there was no intimidation; no-one has seen a rod, no-one had seen a place of detention; as I said above, there were only exhortations. You were all afraid, you fled, you quailed . . . Therefore, all the bishops fled with their clergy, and some died; those who were stronger were caught and banished to far places.[62]

Donatists thus fled from Macarius with some dying on the road. According to Optatus, there was no need for this flight, but he contradicts himself when stating that those caught were banished to distant places – if the refuges had nothing to fear, why would those caught be exiled? The uneasiness of Optatus in defending all of this is evident. After having laboured at defending Macarius, Optatus turns around and distances Macarius' violent actions from the wishes of the Catholics.[63]

Donatist perspectives on this persecution are found in two contemporary martyr-texts, *The Passion of Maximian and Isaac* and *The Passion of Marculus* as well as in the minutes from the Conference of Carthage. According to these texts, Macarius had issued severe decrees calling for unity and stipulating torture and exile for persisting Donatists. Maximian and Isaac did persist, were tortured, and 'in

Figure 44.2 May near Tiddis, Algeria. In the spring of 347, Donatists fled through these lush landscapes on the approach of Macarius. Photo B. Poulsen

an equal destiny bound . . . over for exile'. Isaac died in prison. Maximian along with other confessors awaited his exile in prison. However, the magistrate became afraid of the crowds gathered outside the prison. Consequently, he brought both living confessors and dead martyrs aboard a ship and dumped them at sea. Many leading Donatists, including Donatus himself, were exiled – Donatus' appeal to the emperor had (again) backfired. Most of the exiled clerics would return after yet another appeal to an emperor, this time Julian the Apostate, who gave them back their confiscated churches and permitted their return.[64] Donatus had died in exile around 355 and was replaced by Parmenian.[65] The years in exile of many Donatist leaders did not bring the movement to its knees. Their return was deemed a triumph.[66]

Julian's death in 363 resulted in a change of fortune for the Donatists, either immediately or after seven years. The Donatists described and remembered Romanus, who was *comes* in Africa from 363 to 373 as their persecutor, and Augustine indicates that he punished the Donatists, according to the laws.[67] According to the Theodosian Code, however, it was only in 370 that earlier anti-Donatist laws, repealed by Julian, were re-instated.[68] It is possible to harmonize this chronological contradiction if we assume that Romanus only initiated his persecution after 370. It is equally possible, however, that he initiated a persecution earlier without the support of anti-Donatist legislation. In non-Christian sources, his extortions and corruption are blamed for leading to the rebellion of Firmus in 372.[69] As for this rebellion – and to a lesser degree the subsequent and more long-lived rebellion of his brother Gildo – the Donatists were blamed for giving support; likely the blame was partly justified.[70] Again, this does not make the Donatist movement an ethnic movement in support of political independence from Rome (even Firmus and Gildo were unlikely to have been driven by such motives) – conceivably, however, some Donatists saw these rebellions as chances to be relieved from persecution and, in the case of the Donatist bishop Optatus of Thamugadi, to get support against Catholics and Maximianists.[71]

In the late fourth century CE, numerous imperial edicts were issued against heretic and schismatic movements.[72] Donatists are not mentioned explicitly in any of these, but since some edicts targeted re-baptism, they were likely also aimed at Donatists. Meanwhile, the Donatists were troubled by internal dissent. They concluded that those who had dissented but returned to the communion with other Donatists were not in need of re-baptism. Augustine saw this as Donatist self-contradiction. For the Donatists, this lenience was probably in line with a council decision from around 330. In 405, for the first time in 35 years, the Donatists were explicitly singled out in four edicts issued by the emperor Honorius – ominously they were now declared heretics.[73] Five further edicts followed

Figure 44.3 The sarcophagus of Optatus of Thamugadi? The placement in the main nave and in front of the apse in (the ruins) of the largest basilica in Thamugadi suggests the burial of an important person. Photo R. M. Jensen

in 407–409.[74] Throughout the years 370 to 410, the punishments prescribed for heresy and schism became more severe, and whereas the first edicts targeted church property, clerics and higher orders, increasingly the lower orders were included.

In 410, with the usurper Maximus Tyrannus in tentative control of Spain, with Constantine III (untrustworthy co-emperor) precariously ruling Britain and Gaul, and with Alaric threatening and then invading Italy, Honorius suspended his five-year-old anti-Donatist legislation and called both sides of the schism to a conference. In August 410 Rome was sacked by the Visigoths. With Africa being the only one of Honorius' provinces under stable government, the conference met in Carthage in 411 presided over by the *comes* of Africa, Flavius Marcellinus. Almost 300 Donatist and 300 Catholic bishops appeared for what was a trial, not a synod.[75] The Donatist delegates were obliged to appear. The conference ended with the complete vindication of Catholics and condemnation of Donatists. The full force of Honorius' anti-Donatist legislation was again brought to bear and new edicts followed.

As Augustine's continued polemic shows, this did not spell the end of Donatism, but the movement was now on the defensive and would never again be able to claim to represent a majority of Christians in Africa. When the (Arian) Vandals invaded and ruled Africa, the Catholics re-experienced what the Donatists knew all too well: hostile authorities.[76] Some Catholic-Donatist unity against a common Arian foe might at places have been achieved.[77] Gregory the Great, however, still confronted Donatists in Africa.[78]

Over 100 years, with intervals and varying intensity, the authorities punished Donatists with fines, confiscations, floggings, exile and, although rarely, formal death sentences.[79] In the same period, both parties in the conflict engaged on occasions in mob violence, pillaging and killing. Catholic violence was sometimes backed by Roman soldiers. To some degree, the Donatists reacted in kind; to some degree, they developed the ideological claim that the true church is persecuted and persecutes no-one.

Debate and polemic

To what degree do the sources point to a real debate between Catholics and Donatists? Were the two communities influencing each other? To what degree were Catholics and Donatists reading each other's texts, responding to each other's allegations and arguments? Was there a direct interchange of views? Were protagonists on each side trying to persuade, convince and convert their opponents or members of the out-group? Alternatively, did each side isolate itself in an internal debate? If the former was the case, we would likely see in the sources a need for protagonists to define and maintain the borders of their community. I will now discuss related issues in regard to archeological remains and epigraphy. Does this evidence indicate that the two factions developed different and distinct artistic, architectural or epigraphic traditions? If yes, is there any indication that the polemic found in literature was mirrored by a similar polemic in stone?

These are important questions in their own right, but the analysis also prepares us for a discussion of the schism's theological issues. With little debate between the two sides, it would be easy for a protagonist to grossly misrepresent the other faction's position. No outsider would read the work and be able to challenge such misrepresentation, and with few from the author's own in-group having any first-hand acquaintance with the out-group's positions, few in-group readers would notice any misrepresentation. Conversely, a direct debate and a real ambition on both sides for winning the hearts and minds of those in the out-group and maintaining and patrolling one's own boundaries, set limits for the level of misrepresentation.

The literary debate: the examples of Optatus and Augustine

Of the available evidence, Optatus' and Augustine's writings represent the most important Catholic contributions to the schism's literary debate. Further, it is mostly through these texts that we know of the Donatist contribution and contributors.

Optatus often argues against a (now lost) work of Parmenian, Donatist bishop of Carthage.[80] Further claims to be responding to Donatist reactions and arguments is made in the opening of book seven. Book seven is perhaps a later addition by Optatus to his original six books, and the opening passage might indicate that the six books had provoked a Donatist rejoinder, to which Optatus now responded.[81] Augustine's earliest preserved work against the Donatists was the poetic call for unity in *Psalmus contra partem Donati* (393). Its form and crude imagery indicate that Augustine was concerned with mobilizing common Christians. Since Augustine would hardly expect a Donatist congregation to sing an anti-Donatist psalm, the work must have been aimed at Catholics. This psalm was followed by other works which are now lost and then in 400–405 by three works in which Augustine responded directly to Donatist writings. First, Augustine wrote three books against the letters of the Donatist bishop Petillian (*Contra Litteras Petilliani*). The first two books were written in sequence, but book three was written after Augustine received a reply to the first two books by Petillian himself. Next, Augustine wrote the *Contra epistulam Parmeniani*, which was inspired by the (originally) Donatist (later excommunicated) theologian Tyconius. Last, the Donatist grammarian Cresconius wrote an apologetic tract answering Augustine's allegations against Petillian. Augustine came upon this response and answered in 405 with four books against Cresconius (*Contra Cresconium*). Augustine later wrote other rejoinders to Donatist writings. For example, in 410–411 he wrote a tract on the one baptism (*De unico baptism*), which responded to an anonymous Donatist tract. The Donatists were facing their own (internal) schism, the so-called Maximianists, and a favourite argument of Augustine works was to point to what he perceived as Donatist inconsistency in demanding no re-baptism of Maximianists who joined the Donatists, while they did require baptism of Catholics. This part of Augustine's anti-Donatist corpus clearly indicates a lively interchange of ideas, apology and polemic between Donatists and Catholics.

Augustine did, however, also set his own agenda. In 400–401 he wrote seven books on baptism against the Donatists (*De Baptismo, contra Donatistas*), the lost work, *Contra quod adtulit Centurius a*

Donatistas and the preserved *De unitate ecclesia*, a letter where he instructed fellow Catholic bishops on how to argue against the Donatists. Augustine thus wished to equip the pastors of his party for direct debate with Donatists. As Augustine's theology developed but remained unable to carry the day, he began to advocate the use of force. His argument is most fully developed in a letter addressed in 417 to the *comes* of Africa (*De Correctione Donatistarum*).[82] Augustine argued that Donatist victims of such persecutions were not martyrs; these arguments were fully developed in two books (*Contra Gaudentium*) written in 420 against the Donatist bishop Gaudentius of Thamugadi.

Several of Augustine's (other) letters deal either in the main or in part with Donatism.[83] Further, several of Augustine's sermons admonish Donatists to repent, or instruct Catholics on how to think of the Donatists and receive them upon their repentance. The occasional direct address to Donatists in these sermons suggests that some Donatists might have attended services in Catholic churches. On one level, this shows that there was much else to life in fourth- and fifth-century Africa than the Catholic-Donatist schism (cf. Victor's perspective). On another level, Augustine's addressing of Donatists in his sermons points to a direct contact and direct exposure to each other's arguments. Vivid imagery and application of biblical prophecy to present-day situations dominate the sermons.[84] Finally, several passages in his biblical commentaries address the Donatist issue or challenge their interpretations of scripture.[85] This, along with his use of scripture in his works that focus on the Donatists, shows that there was no difference between Catholics and Donatists in their use and regard for scripture, just as there was no difference of opinion concerning the composition of the canon. That two conflicting branches of the church were in such agreement on which scriptures to use as authoritative, even in an age that preceded or coincided with more formal decisions and lists on the composition of the canon, suggests that the canon-issue, at least in Africa, was largely settled in what we might call an anonymous process, before more formal decisions codified the result. This subject would merit a closer examination.[86]

Figure 44.4 Baptistery in Thamugadi, Algeria. Archeologists have so far discovered seventeen churches and church complexes in Thamugadi. This baptistery (one of three) was attached to the largest basilica (1409 m^2). Perhaps it was this basilica that Gaudentius threatened to barricade and torch in order to resist persecution. Photo R. M. Jensen

A polemic set in stone?

The rather rich Christian epigraphic and archeological remains have successfully been used to discuss the life of African Christians, including their church-architecture, art, rituals, burial customs, etc.[87] The material is well suited for a study of 'Christianity in Africa' or 'African Christianity'.

However, scholars have also used material evidence to study the Catholic-Donatist schism, more particularly the proliferation of the two factions, and to interpret this dissemination as a result of competition and as evidence for the two communities' relative strength in different geographic areas. Peter Brown has argued that the astonishing number of African church ruins is evidence for an intense Catholic-Donatist building contest. Brown writes 'Each church was an argument in stone in favor of one church or the other'.[88] This interpretation entails that the fourth and fifth centuries were dominated in Africa by the Catholic-Donatist schism. Further, the claim that each church was 'an argument in stone', would require that each church was easily identifiable as either Catholic or Donatist. Elsewhere, Brown argues that fourth- and fifth-century Africa was not dominated by the schism and states that it is only extremely rarely possible to identify churches as either Catholic or Donatist.[89]

Many of the few churches that have been identified have been so using a set of criteria developed a century ago by Paul Monceaux.[90] His criteria for distinguishing Catholic from Donatist inscriptions proved highly influential. Following Monceaux and Brown, the polemic, visible in our literary sources, also manifested itself in the erection of churches, in architecture, art and inscriptions.[91]

In 1989, however, Harding challenged Monceaux's criteria and argued that most of his supposed epigraphic and architectural identity markers are in fact not partisan. For example, according to Augustine's polemic the Donatists used an exclamation, *deo laudes* ('praise be to God') almost as a battle-cry when roaming the land or when celebrating their drunken rites. In contrast, the Catholics exclaimed *deo gratias* ('thanks be to God'). *Deo laudes* is found on 21 inscriptions and *deo gratias* on six and Monceaux concluded that these inscriptions were without doubt Donatist and Catholic respectively and could be used to identify churches and burial grounds as belonging to one or the other party.[92] There are several problems. First, Augustine is the only witness for these practices. Second, the difficulty of dating: with no firm dating on most of these inscriptions and with the few inscriptions that are relatively fixed in their dating ranging from the fourth to the sixth centuries, are we to believe that the Donatists for all this time were able to monopolize for themselves and all over Africa the use of the phrase *deo laudes* – and the Catholics *deo gratias*, when even Augustine never claims this? Third, Augustine himself in one sermon instructs his congregation to say *deo laudes*, and there is no indication that he wants his congregation to appropriate a Donatist exclamation. His point is simply that the congregation ought to thank God.[93] Similarly, Harding provides numerous references to passages in Augustine's commentaries on the Psalms, where he exhorts his readers to praise the Lord/God (*laudare dominum/deum*).[94] Fourth, Augustine relates an episode where his congregation in Hippo, gathered for the service on Easter Sunday, celebrates the miraculous healing of a certain Paulus by shouting *deo gratias*, *deo laudes*. There is no hint that one part of the congregation was Catholics and the other Donatists and that they engaged in a shouting contest; rather the whole church is celebrating together and Augustine is happy.[95] Fifth, in Chapter 5 of the *Abitinian Martyrs*, a martyr used in prayer the (supposedly Catholic) slogan *deo gratias* – the supposedly Donatist slogan *deo laudes* does not appear in any Donatist martyr-texts. Sixth, Optatus relates that twelve bishops, who became Donatist leaders, gathered in Cirta during the reign of Maximian (i.e. before May 305) and decided to show clemency towards apostates – most of the bishops confessed to having collaborated with the authorities. Optatus claims to build on the minutes of the meeting produced by Nundinarius, and quotes from the conclusion of the meeting that all the bishops said *deo gratias*.[96] Nundinarius is not to be trusted, but that is unimportant here. Crucially, there is no indication in Optatus that the Donatists should thereby have been using what Optatus or his readers – or Nundinarius and his readers – would have perceived as a

distinctly Catholic 'slogan'. On the contrary, the passage in Optatus shows that such a slogan in his times (360s) could equally well be envisaged in the mouth of Donatists. We can thus not assume (expanding recklessly on Augustine) that there were distinct Donatist and Catholic slogans in use (and set in stone) as identity markers all over Africa for decades.

Accordingly, if the conflict ever manifested itself significantly in epigraphy, in art or in architecture with distinct (and mutually polemic) traditions and forms developing in the two communities, then this is no longer in evidence. Cautiously, this confirms Victor's perspective. Additionally, with so few examples of remains that can be positively identified as either Catholic or Donatist, it is impossible to draw any conclusions from the epigraphic and archeological material regarding the geographical dissemination of Donatism and Catholicism.

The archeological and epigraphic material is thus well suited to studying Christianity in Africa, but unsuitable for a direct study of the Catholic-Donatist schism.

Main issues in the Catholic-Donatist conflict

In Chapter 69 of Augustine's handbook on heresies from 428 he addressed Donatism. According to Augustine, then in his old age, Donatism is a schism that emerged from the challenge to Caecilian's ordination and the subsequent election of Maiorinus and then Donatus. Augustine finds no room to describe any dogmatic flaw in Donatist theology. On the contrary, he is even apologetically, on behalf of the Donatists, stating that their doctrines on the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are soundly Trinitarian and that any apparent (subordinate) deviation from Catholic doctrine in their writings is unintended and due to imprecision in expression. Coming from a bishop who had vehemently fought Donatism, such a summary of the essence of the dispute is remarkable. Was it really all due to the ordination of Caecilian and the counter-ordination of Maiorinus? Scholars find this hard to accept and, quoting R.A. Marcus, look for explanations at 'deeper, and more intractable' levels.[97] Such a search is justified. An original strife over an issue of two clerics, however intense, could hardly have engaged thousands of people for hundreds of years without 'fuel' being added to the 'fire'.[98] Scholars have brought forward two different 'sets' of issues, either as root causes, or as fuel feeding the already burning fire. I will label the first set of issues theological; the second political-ethnic and social-economic.

Theological issues

Augustine and Optatus contributed to a Donatist-Catholic debate, where appeals to conversion were being made and where theologians on both sides erected and patrolled their own communities' boundaries. This context limited the degree to which the two Catholic authors could misrepresent the positions of their opponents. On the other hand, it also meant that they saw a need to differentiate the Catholic position from that of the Donatists. Augustine and Optatus may therefore be used, in combination with other sources, including the minutes from the conference in Carthage, to see at least the main issues that were being discussed.[99]

Based on these sources, scholarship has identified two clusters of theological issues in the Donatist-Catholic controversy. The first cluster of issues included questions of apostasy, re-baptism and ecclesiology.[100] How was the church to view, treat and potentially re-integrate or acknowledge those who apostatized, handed over scriptures, or otherwise compromised themselves during the Great Persecution? A Donatist sermon from around 317–321 discusses how lapsed clerics might be re-integrated. The text implies that humility placates God, but that specific clerics were instead ensnared by the Devil to be proud.[101] The sermon's idea of forgiveness and reintegration is thus at odds with later Catholic polemic representation of Donatist theology, which is not to say that the later polemic was necessarily at odds with a more developed Donatist position.[102] Connected to this issue, there surfaced the question of how to view, treat and potentially re-integrate or acknowledge

Figure 44.5 Thamugadi, baptismal font of the second largest basilica (Catholic?). While the Catholic and Donatist rite of baptism was identical, they disagreed on whether a baptism performed by a lapsed cleric was valid. Photo R. M. Jensen

those who were baptized or ordained by clerics after these clerics had compromised themselves.[103] Here the Donatists argued, following Cyprian, that re-baptism was required, while the Catholics argued, following Rome, that the original baptism was valid and not to be repeated. This theological difference surfaced already at the council in Arles.

The Donatists, however, would not be unwavering in their attitude to this question. Around 330, a council of 270 Donatist bishops presided over by Donatus agreed that whole Mauretanian congregations, who had hitherto been in communion with Caecilian, could join the Donatist church without re-baptism and that their clerics could continue in office.[104] While Augustine frowned upon this as hypocrisy, it might equally indicate that the Donatist position was nuanced, palpable and developing with events as they unfolded over the decades. Equally, the Catholic position on the validity of ordinations performed outside the Catholic Church was not without its inconsistencies. As Mark Edwards has observed, the Catholics were willing to acknowledge clerics ordained by Arians. However, as the Catholic-Donatist schism hardened, Catholics were for most of the fourth century, and in contrast to the decisions in Arles, unwilling to recognize Donatist ordinations.[105] Connected to this was the question of ecclesiology. In the debate between Donatists and Catholics, the Donatists gradually stressed the purity of the church, with its members being the holy and the elect, while the Catholics gradually stressed that the visible church was comprised of both sinners and saints with only God being able to differentiate.[106] Tyconius was a major inspiration behind the development of the Catholic positon. Tyconius was in turn condemned by other Donatists, but himself insisted on being Donatist.[107] All of this suggests nuances and mutual inspiration in the development of ecclesiology.

The second cluster of theological issues was comprised of the question of church-empire relationship and martyrdom.[108] Donatus allegedly said, 'What has the church to do with the Emperor'.[109]

This catch-phrase is put into his mouth by Optatus in a context in 347 where Optatus blames the Donatists for bringing on themselves Macarius' persecution.[110] Optatus' narrative shows that Donatus' attitude to emperor and empire was more nuanced. Optatus relates how Donatus and other Donatists repeatedly appealed to emperors and magistrates. This, in the context of Optatus' polemic, is used to portray Donatus as a hypocrite. Assuming that Donatus ever claimed that church and emperor had nothing to do with each other, this attitude might have been shaped and developed in accord with the numerous occasions on which Donatus experienced persecutions and saw his hopes for support (or reversal of policy) from emperors and magistrates shattered.[111] The different views on church-empire relations between Catholics and Donatists that our sources portray probably developed from the experiences of the two communities in the fourth and fifth centuries and with the two communities' needs to maintain their identities. The perception that Catholic theology on church-empire relations was inherently more positive than the Donatist, cannot stand for a comparison with Catholic polemic against Julian and Constantius. There was in 307–311 no empire-friendly party in the African Christian community that separated itself from an empire-hostile party on account of such conflicting ideologies.

Following the polemic in Optatus and Augustine on Donatist devotion to martyrs, it has been assumed that Catholics were moderate in their devotion, while Donatists were enthusiastic and fuelled this enthusiasm with fresh stories of martyrs of Catholic oppression. Based on the Lucialla story and the tradition that Mensurius and Caecilian prevented Christians from supplying the confessors in prison during the Great Persecution, Frend has even argued that Mensurius and Caecilian discouraged martyr-cult and that this was one of the main reasons why some opposed Caecilian's ordination. Frend argues that there were two parties in the African church: a traditional, native party committed to martyrs, and a more moderate, Romanized party with stronger links to the Roman church. Lucialla, the poor Christians in Carthage and the Numidian bishops belonged to the first party; Mensurius, Caecilian and the sophisticated Carthaginian Christians to the latter.[112] Such a neat distinction cannot be maintained. Catholics celebrated with equal enthusiasm most of the same martyrs as the Donatists.[113] Both Catholics and Donatists claimed that their victims were martyrs while the other side vehemently contested this.[114] Furthermore, Donatists were not willing to confer the title of martyr on just any victim within their own rank. A Donatist sermon from around 317–321 testifies that there was reservation about acknowledging that Donatists who had been clubbed to death by soldiers were true martyrs since there was no (or limited) shedding of blood.[115] Further, while language of martyrdom was elsewhere frequently used (by exiles and their supporters) to describe the bravery and tribulations of exiled clerics, the limited available evidence suggests that Donatists took pride in exile, but carefully avoided using language of martyrdom for this.[116] On the whole, Donatist attitudes to martyrdom seem to have been multifaceted with strong cautious, traditional and conservative 'voices'.[117]

Spectra of positions on these and other issues probably co-existed (latently) in the (African) church prior to the split without causing any division. The division in 307–311 was caused, as the old Augustine concluded, by Caecilian and Maiorinus' ordinations. Further, it is unlikely that clerics, congregations and 'ordinary' Christians in 307–311 and subsequent years would have opted to join one or the other faction based on their prior opinions on one or more of the issues of baptism, church-empire relationship, martyr-ideology, etc. with all the 'rigorists' becoming Donatists and all the 'slackers' Catholics. This is not to suggest that the disputed issues were unimportant; they would indeed surface and be developed in the processes whereby the two communities identified themselves over against each other.

No root cause of the conflict, no core and no deeper level has been uncovered. No central initiating grievances of the two parties remained divisive and decisive for decades. Rather, the two parties were dynamically in debate with each other and, in their efforts to mobilize and justify their own community and position, they developed and refined positions. Augustine's old-age conclusion, where he found no other core or no other origin to the conflict besides the ordination of the two rival bishops, is vindicated.

A political-ethnic or social-economic movement?

From at least as early as 1898 there have been numerous attempts in scholarship to argue that the core in the Donatist schism, or at least the fuel of the conflict once it was started, was nationalist, ethnic or political aspirations for independence from Rome and a Romanized local elite or a social protest movement of the oppressed poor.[118] With Frend's *The Donatist Church* (1952), such theories found their ablest champion. The political-ethnic, social-economic explanations came to dominate in the 1960s and 1970s to an extent where some scholars treated theological issues in the conflict as mere pretexts covering the real underlying causes.[119] Underpinning these theories were speculations that the Donatist church should have differed significantly from the Catholic in its social, cultural or ethnic make-up and that the two churches were represented unequally in different geographic regions of Africa. The Donatist church, according to such theories, was made up of native, un-Romanized Berbers or Punics, of the poorer segments of the population. The Catholics in contrast were more Romanized and, on average, more well to do. Further, Donatists were supposed to have been in the majority in Numidia and in the countryside, with Catholics in the majority in Africa Proconsularis and in cities.

Later critics of the political-ethnic or social-economic theories have raised a number of objections to these theories and have reasserted the centrality of the theological issues:[120]

- There was empirical deconstruction of the various theories (ethnic, geographic, cultural or economic) that the Donatist church should have attracted or gathered one kind of Christians and the Catholics another. For example, without support from the emperor, and even in spite of occasional persecutions resulting in exile and confiscations, the Donatists were able for decades to muster significant financial resources, a fact that indicates that there would have been wealthy members able to support the movement.[121]
- It was observed that the Roman authorities for most of the fourth century were restrained and hesitant in persecuting the Donatists. This included Constantine, who during his persecution of the Donatists prior to 321 used exile as the hardest punishment, and who in 321 called off the persecution and offered, for the rest of his reign, tolerance for the Donatists. Such restraint would hardly have been exercised had Donatism been, as some scholars have contested, a nationalistic movement aspiring to African independence or a social movement fighting for a major redistribution of wealth and property.[122]

Conclusion: a derogatory term and rich legacy

Donatus, the bishop of Carthage, was an important figure for the Donatists. In spite of this, they never took to heart and used about themselves the most popular exonym applied to their church by their opponents, Donatists; the term remained derogatory. As such, it was readily available for much later Christian polemicists when they wanted to slander their Christian opponents. At the time of the Reformation, the term re-emerged as a designation for Protestants. Donatism, however, left behind a surprisingly rich legacy in the form of literary, epigraphic and archeological remains. As for the literary legacy, not all of it was filtered through the polemic texts of the Donatists' opponents, which leaves the Donatists with a still engaging voice to be studied. As for the epigraphy and archeology, we are rarely able to distinguish Catholic from Donatist remains. In the tranquility of the thousands of church ruins still scattered in the African landscape, we finally find Victor's perspective of one church vindicated, and here at last we see the unity of the African church that so eluded zealous protagonists from Donatus to Augustine.

Notes

1 I thank Nicholas A. Marshall for valuable comments and Robin M. Jensen and Birte Poulsen for allowing me to use their photos.

2 Aug. *Contra Cresconium* 3.30.34.

3 Optatus, Appendix 1.1. Translations from Optatus from Edwards 1997.
4 Brown 2012: 330.
5 Burns and Jensen 2014; Van Oort and Wischmeyer 2011.
6 Kaufman 2009: 131
7 Frend 1997: 611, 626
8 Petschenig 1908–1910, Labrousse 1995–1996, Maier 1987–1989, Lancel 1972–1991, Edwards 1997, Tilley 1996 and Coleman-Norton 1966.
9 Jerome, *Vil.ill.* knows of only six books. Optatus 2.3 speaks of the Diocletian persecution as happening 60 years ago, but mentions Siricius as bishop of Rome (in office from 384). A publication in the 360s followed by a 380s edition adding also Book 7 could account for this. Edwards 1997: xvi–xviii, 33, Evers 2010: 167–72 and Monceaux 1901–1923: 4.450–3.
10 Optatus 1.4, 1.6, 1.10, 1.21, 1.28, 2.10, 2.19, 4.9.
11 Fox 2015: 26–7.
12 Monceaux 1901–1923: 7.275–92.
13 Tilley 1999: 34–9.
14 E.g. *In. Ioh. Evang.* 6.25 and 13.17.
15 Babcock 1989.
16 Tilley 1996: 26, 1997: 49 date the text to the early fourth century; Dearn 2004 to the late fourth or early fifth.
17 Maier 1987–1989: 1.201–11 and Tilley 1997: 51–60.
18 Council of Cebarussi in Aug. *En. In Ps.* 36.2.20 (cf. Maier 1987–1989: 2.73–82).
19 *Gesta* 1.55, 1.133, 2.43–8. Tilley 1991: 7–8 and Evers 2010: 161.
20 Frend 1952 and Harding 1989: 74–138.
21 Frend 1952: 52–5, 1997: 613, Raven 1993: 178–9, Brown 2012: 334–8 and Harding 1989: 117–20.
22 Burns and Jensen 2014: li–lii, 87–163, 224–32, 287–8, 354–5, 432–3, 484–5, 548, 596.
23 Edwards 1997: 16–17, Frend and Clancy 1977: 104–9, Barnes 1975: 18–20 and Alexander 2000: 952.
24 Optatus 1.13. Engberg 2007, Shaw 2011: 591–7, Burns and Jensen 2014: 7–25, 38–41.
25 Frend 1952: 142–3 and Burns and Jensen 2014: 195–201.
26 Optatus 1.13–15 for polemic against apostates.
27 Optatus, 1.24 and Appendix 2, and Aug. *Ep.* 43.13.
28 Burns and Jensen 2014: 332–3.
29 Optatus 1.18.
30 Optatus 1.19.
31 Aug. *Ep. Ad Cath.* 25.73 and *C. ep. Parm.* 1.3.5 and Hier. *Ep.* 133.4. Harding 1989: 27–8.
32 Aug. *Breviculus Collationis cum Donatistis* 3.13.25
33 Frend 1952: 7, 142; Tilley 1997 and Ubiña 2013: 31.
34 Frend 1952: 142.
35 Tilley 1997.
36 Ubiña 2013: 32–3.
37 Optatus 1.22.
38 Frend 1952: 146 and Harding 1989: 186.
39 Eusebius, *H.E.* 10.5.18–20, Optatus 1.22, Aug. *Ep.* 88.2. Frend 1952: 147 and Harding 1989: 186.
40 Optatus 1.23–4 and Aug. *Brev. Coll.* 3.12.24 and 3.15.17. Frend 1952: 148–9 and Harding 1989: 187.
41 Optatus Appendix 3 and 4, Eusebius *H.E.* 10.5.21–4, *Concilium Arelatense*. Frend 1952: 151–2 and Harding 1989: 188.
42 Optatus, Appendix 2 and 6, and Aug. *C. Cresc.* 3.71.82. Harding 1989: 188.
43 Harding 1989: 189 and Engberg 2016.
44 Aug. *Ad Don. Post Coll.* 31.54. Engberg 2016 and Grasmück 1964: 79–108.
45 Gesta 3.258, Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.45, Optatus 1.26, 3.1–10 and Appendix 7. Frend 1952: 156–62.
46 *Sermo Donati* 2, Aug. *Ep.* 88.3, 93.14, 105.9, *C. litt. Petil.* 2.92.205 and *C.Th.* 16.6.2, a later law against re-baptisers claiming a base in laws back to Constantine. Harding 1989: 188–92.
47 Eusebius, *H.E.* 10.6.5 and Optatus, Appendix 5.
48 Sermo Donati 6–8 and Aug. *C. litt. Petil.* 2.92.202.
49 Perhaps the changed policy was occasioned by a Donatist petition, *Capit.* 3.543–7, Aug. *Brev. Coll.* 3.21.39 and *Ep.* 141.9 and Optatus, *Appendix* 9. Harding 1989: 193
50 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*.
51 *C.Th. 16.5.1.* Grasmück 1964: 90 and Harding 1989: 194.
52 Optatus, Appendix 10. Frend 1952: 162–8.
53 Aug. *Ep.* 93.43.
54 Optatus 3.4 and Aug. *Contra Gaudentium* 1.28.32. Frend 1952: 171–6, Tengström 1964: 24–78, Shaw 2004, Brown 2012: 328–9, Kaufman 2009: 133–9, Alexander 2000: 958–62 and Harding 1989: 68–73.

55 Aug. *Contra Epistolam Parmeniani* 1.10.16, *Contra Gaudentium* 1.22–32, *Ep*. 88.8, 185.3.12 and *Ep. Ad cath*. 19.50.
56 Raven 1993: 180–1.
57 Aug. *C. litt. Petil*. 1.24.26 and *Gesta cap*. 297.
58 Optatus 3.4.
59 Optatus 3.1–3. Frend 1952: 177–82 and Harding 1989: 195–7.
60 *Gesta* 3.30 and 1.188–92.
61 Optatus 3.12 and 7.6.
62 Optatus 3.1.
63 Optatus 3.2, see however 7.6.
64 Optatus 2.16, Ammianus Marcellinus 22.5.4, Aug. *Ep*. 93.12, 105.9 and *C. litt. Petil*. 2.92.203–5 and 97.224. Harding 1989: 198–200.
65 Optatus 2.7. Frend 1952: 181.
66 Grasmück 1964: 132–9 and Raven 1993: 180.
67 *Gesta* 3.258 and Aug. *C. litt. Petil*. 3.25.29. Monceaux 1901–1923: 5.208, Harding 1989: 200–1 and Grasmück 1964: 139–58.
68 *C. Th*. 16.2.18 and 16.5.37.
69 Ammianus Marcellinus 26.4.5, 27.9.1–5, 28.6, 29.5 and Zosimus 4.16.3.
70 Aug. *Ep*. 87.4–10, *Contra Cresconium* 3.60.66 and *C. litt. Petil* 1.24–6, Frend 1952: 171, Tilley 1997: 94, Raven 1993: 181–5 and Blackhurst 2004: 62–73.
71 Frend 1952: 198, 224–5, Warmington 1954: 10–11, Tengstöm 1964: 79–90 and Alexander 2000: 221–2.
72 Noethlichs 1971: 80–191 and Harding 1989: 201–2.
73 *C. Th*. 16.5.38–9 and 16.6.4–5. Morgenstern 1993.
74 *C. Th*. 16.5.40–1, 16.5.43–4, 16.5.46.
75 Tilley 1991.
76 Tilley 2001: 9–13 and Whelan 2014: 506.
77 Burns and Jensen 2014: 61–75 and Whelan 2014: 506–8.
78 Greg. Mag., *Ep*. 1.72, 1.75, 1.82, 2.39, 4.32, 4.35, 6.36; Burns and Jensen 2014: 80–2 and Tilley 2001: 20–1.
79 *Passio Marculi* and *Passio Maximiani et Isaac*.
80 Optatus 1.4, 1.6, 1.10, 1.21, 1.28, 2.10, 2.19, 4.9.
81 Optatus, 7.1.1.; Evers 2010: 171.
82 Aug. *Retractiones* 1.19, 1.20, 2.31, 2.43, 2.45, 2.48, 2.51, 2.85.
83 E.g. Aug., *Ep*. 23, 86, 87, 89, 93, 97, 100, 105, 133, 134, 149, 173, 204.
84 E.g. *Sermo ad Caesariensis ecclesiae* 2–3, 7–8.
85 Cf. for example Augustine's *Commentary on the Galatians* 15.12.
86 It could build on and expand Stuhlhofer 1988.
87 Burns and Jensen 2014.
88 Brown 2012: 334.
89 Harding 1989 : 115–38.
90 Monceaux 1901–1923: 4.436–84 and Harding 1989: 74–5.
91 Frend 1952: 54–7 and Brown 2012: 326–31.
92 Monceaux 1901–1923: 4.439–42 and Frend 1997: 614.
93 Aug., *Serm* 64,1,104. Shaw claims that this sermon is wrongly attributed to Augustine arguing that 'its injunction to shout "Deo Laudes" is absolutely un-Augustinian' (Shaw 2011: 470). There is no reference to other scholars questioning the sermon's attribution to Augustine.
94 Harding 1989: 83: Aug. *Enarr.* in *ps*. 144, 145, 146, 149, 150.
95 Aug. *Civ. Dei* 22.8.
96 Optatus 1.14.
97 Marcus 1999: 286 and Alexander 2000: 962.
98 Dearn 2004: 2.
99 Tilley 1997: 4–6 on methodology.
100 Alexander 2000: 962–3.
101 *Sermo Donati* 2
102 Optatus 2.24.
103 Schima 2011: 68.
104 Aug. *Ep*. 93.43. Frend 1952: 167.
105 Edwards 1997: 53.
106 Burns and Jensen 2014: 606–20.
107 Gaw 2013: 52–6 and Grasmück 1964: 158–9.
108 Alexander 2000: 221.
109 Optatus 3.3.

110 Optatus 3.1–4.
111 Shaw 2011: 517 and Frend 1952: 171.
112 Frend 1952: 142–3.
113 Shaw 2011: 587–8, 598–612, Burns and Jensen 2014: 541–50.
114 Aug. *Sermo* 285.2 and 328.8, Shaw 2011: 513–23.
115 *Sermo Donati* 6.
116 Engberg 2016.
117 Alexander 2000: 957.
118 Some combined multiple factors, others opposed some theories while arguing for one or two others.
119 For critique of this Tilley 1997: 11–21, Evers 2010: 156–7 and Harding 1989: 25–73, 139–73, 265–335.
120 Evers 2010: 158.
121 Tilley 1997: 13 and Evers 2010: 156.
122 Kriegbaum 1986.

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45
ARIANISM

David Rankin

Contemporary interest/scholarship in 'Arianism'

Since the late 1980s, scholarship dealing with the Trinitarian debates of the fourth century has largely shifted from a reading of the period as a struggle between a claimed orthodoxy, supposedly represented by the Creed of Nicaea and Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria from 328, and a heterodoxy, represented by Arius, presbyter of Alexandria, and the bishops Eusebii of Caesarea and Nicomedia respectively, to one by the whole church of that period to come to terms with how the Son of God might be understood as God in the same way as the Father had been traditionally so understood. A further shift since the mid 1990s has seen the emergence of a scholarly near consensus that we cannot, and indeed should not, speak any longer of 'Arianism' in any meaningful way – or of any of its correlates, 'Semi-Arianism' or 'Neo-Arianism' among them – or of Homoousian, Homoiousian, Homoian, Heteroousian or Anomoian 'parties' in this context, so that even the title of this chapter might seem both inappropriate and unhelpful, if not indeed simply wrong. Contemporary scholarship suggests that even to speak of an 'Arian' heresy makes impossible any attempt to get at the truth of what took place from the early 320s until the later fourth century over this matter. Indeed, much contemporary scholarship suggests that even the notion of an 'Arian controversy' is a construct developed by Athanasius to provide for his own political and theological rehabilitation from the mid 330s until his own death thirty years later. As I indicated in my 2000 essay 'the charge of espousing "Arian" views remains a potent and potentially damaging one even in modern times' (Rankin 2000: 975).

Michel Barnes, writing in 1998, believed that 'the last fifteen years or so have seen a major re-evaluation of "Arianism"; not the least of these re-evaluations is new doubt about the authenticity of the traditional category and designation "Arian(ism)"' (1998: 47); he recognised there that 'Arius' theology is now rehabilitated to this extent: it is clear that Arius' theology was not an alien theology, but a Christian theology which would have appeared familiar even to those who profoundly disagreed with it' (1998: 47). Such a re-evaluation has continued in the decades and more since then. Barnes continues by declaring that 'the idea that there was a post-Nicene "Arian conspiracy" run by closeted Arians who secretly believed that the Son was a creature seems initially to have been promoted by Marcellus in his polemic against those who opposed him' and that 'Nicaea slowly acquired its authority only after shedding its modalist associations' (1998: 53). 'The Nicene creed became normative only through the process of excluding the modalist content' (1998: 62). Modalism or Sabellianism (in the east) or Patripassianism (in the west) was a belief – common in the second and third centuries and opposed to the view that God is one being eternally existing in three distinct

persons or existents or entities – that God is simply one person or existent or entity who has revealed or manifested himself in three forms or modes at various times, but never as Father, Son or Holy Spirit at the same time.

Ayres declares that 'Arius' own theology is of little importance in understanding the major debates of the rest of the [fourth] century' (2004: 56). He also comments that 'it is not at all clear that at Nicaea [in 325] the term *homoousios* was understood to be the technical focus of the creed [promulgated there]' (2004: 93).

> In the context of Nicaea's creed . . . all the theologians mentioned in this paragraph [Alexander, Marcellus, Eustathius, Eusebius of Caesarea, and Athanasius] also probably saw *homoousios* as expanding on and secondary to the phrase 'from the *ousia* of the Father', the sense of the term thus being governed by the generic relationship indicated there.
>
> *(2004: 96)*

This is a crucial matter for exploring much of the debate in the fourth century in this matter. Ayres comments that 'during the years 325–42 neither Arius nor the particular terminology used at Nicaea were at the heart of theological controversy' (2004: 100). And what is more – and he is almost certainly right – that 'for many Eastern bishops the controversy over Marcellus is much more foundational than prior conflict over Arius' (2004: 102). The potential modalist reading of Nicaea cannot be brushed aside. Thus, he concludes, 'Athanasius' decision to make Nicaea and *homoousios* central to his theology [and to the shape and contours and parameters of the whole debate in the fourth century and its reading in modern times] has its origins in the shifting climate of the 350s and the structure of emerging Homoian theology' (2004: 144).

Gwynn declares it to be 'difficult to distinguish possible fact from polemical rhetoric' (2007: 132) and that 'it is difficult to exaggerate the influence that these Athanasian passages have exerted upon later reconstructions of the period following the Council of Nicaea' (2007: 139). This alone remains a good reason for re-visiting and re-exploring traditional understandings of fourth-century debates and, if necessary, revising these so that, at the very least, our modern Trinitarian conversations are not tainted by past misunderstandings. Gwynn does say, however, that he does not 'deny that a "Eusebian party" in some form might actually exist, for a number of the individuals whom Athanasius condemns certainly knew and corresponded with each other' (2007: 167). He does say, nevertheless, that 'it is Athanasius' construction of the "Arianism" of the "Eusebians" that reveals most explicitly the degree to which Athanasius has distorted our understanding of his foes, of himself, and of the fourth-century theological controversies' (2007: 169). Indeed he demonstrates that the heresy of which Athanasius speaks – Gwynn calls it 'Athanasian Arianism' – 'does not derive from the writings of Arius or of the individuals who allegedly comprise the "Eusebians"' (2007: 169). Some scholars indeed would suggest that the primary heresies combatted in the fourth century were those of Marcellus of Ancyra (and of Athanasius himself!). Gwynn concludes that:

> [t]he 'Arian party' of the 'Eusebians' never existed as a distinct ecclesiastical or theological entity, and that the 'Arianism' that Athanasius attributes to those men does not reflect either the doctrines of Arius himself [from his own writings] or the known writings of any of the individual 'Eusebians'.
>
> *(2007: 245)*

Gwynn points to the value in 'the removal of polemical labels like "Arian" or "Nicene", and the abandonment of the polarization inherent in such language' (2007: 249). Lyman declares that 'historically, this polarized theological tradition has made the origins and significance of Arius and the later opponents of Nicaea difficult to reconstruct' (2008: 238). She observes that 'scholars have begun to unravel the assumed theological ties between Arius and those later called "Arians"'.

They now reject a coherent movement called 'Arianism', but rather study the variety of doctrines and alliances of those opposed to Nicaea, i.e. 'non-Nicenes' (2008: 238). 'If we discard the label "Arian"', she declares:

> [a]s a collective for those who opposed Nicaea or Athanasius, we are returned to the complex theological negotiations of varied authors. In the East, the polemical title of 'Arian' did not even figure in all controversies or was used as a theoretical boundary in contradistinction to modalism.
>
> *(2008: 247)*

This shift in the reading of the fourth-century conversation about the nature of the triune God will, I hope, be evident in this chapter.

Arius and early 'Arianism' (318–325)

The precise order of events surrounding the outbreak of the 'Arian controversy' has been the subject of intense debate for as long as scholars have studied the period. The contemporary consensus on dating events – which is not significantly affected by major changes in the way most scholars now read the period – has it that at some time around 320 CE, Arius (256–336 CE), a presbyter in Alexandria and native of Libya, took exception to the teachings of his bishop Alexander concerning the relationship of the Son to the Father. Now while Alexander does not in his encyclical traditionally dated to 319 (although it must be later) (Urkunde 4b) – where the chief target is not Eusebius of Nicomedia but that of its anathema Arius himself – tell us much of what he believes, he does tell us what he believes Arius and others allegedly aligned with him do. This is that 'God was not always Father, that the Word of God was not from eternity but was made (by God) out of nothing, out of the non-existent'. And while Arius himself, in his own letter to his bishop (Urkunde 6) (Williams suggests 321 as the date), does not tell us what he reckons that that bishop believes but only what

Figure 45.1 Late Roman mosaic representation of Alexandria from Jerash in Jordan. Photo J. C. N. Coulston

he himself teaches, in his letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia, written in the same year (Urkunde 1), he does say what Alexander 'publicly teaches', that God has always been and the Son has always been, that Father and Son exist together, that the Son has his existence unbegotten along with God, and is both 'ever begotten', 'without having been begotten, that God [the Father] does not precede the Son by thought or interval however small, that both God and Son have always been, and that the Son is from God himself'. Arius is here the traditionalist monotheist whose fear is that his bishop is not so, and perhaps even a modalist. Arius' letter to his own bishop makes clear that he, Arius, maintains that there are three distinct *hypostaseis*, that God [the Father] is alone unbegun and that the Son was 'begotten apart from time by the Father, and being created and found before the ages, was not before his generation', but 'being begotten apart from time before all things, he was alone made to subsist by the Father'. The Son 'is not eternal or co-eternal or co-originate with the Father' neither does he have his being together with the Father. God the Father alone is Monad and Beginning of all. At the same time, Arius rules out, among other things, the notion that the Son might be *homoousios* with the Father as a portion of the Father.

Alexander then took formal action against Arius and some others, and this action in its turn occasioned the letter of Arius to Eusebius of Nicomedia, complaining of his treatment at the hands of Alexander (Williams dates this letter to 321/2). Alexander then advised the wider church of his action in anathematising Arius (Urkunde 4b).

Arius himself and 'Arianism': documentary evidence

There are a number of extant documents which relate to the early period of the controversy, particularly to those events involving Arius himself, and which give us some idea about Arius' own theology. We have looked above at Arius' letter to his bishop preserved by both Athanasius and (thankfully) Epiphanius; at Arius' letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia preserved by both Theodoret and Epiphanius; and at the encyclical letter of Alexander, announcing Arius' anathematisation, preserved by the historian Socrates. There is also Arius' confession of faith addressed to the emperor preserved by both Socrates and Sozomen. In this confession, Arius claims both to have been vindicated by recent events and to have held faithfully to the teaching of the church and, more importantly, of the scriptures.

The actual letters of Arius – in which we can place trust as being accurate representations of his beliefs – are, of course, the most helpful when examining his thoughts. Also of some value – although this is increasingly questioned by scholars given that they do not stand up particularly well when compared with the letters and therefore should be employed only for verification – are the extracts which Athanasius claims to have lifted from Arius' metrical piece, the *Thalia*, and which can be found at both the *De Synodis* (15) and the *Orationes contra Arianos* (1.5–6). While Kannengiesser has argued rather strongly (1983: 467) that the *Thalia* were written in the 360s by a later sympathiser rather than by Arius himself, the contemporary consensus is that both sets of extracts, however refashioned or represented by Athanasius or by his own source, originated with Arius himself (Williams 1987: 65–6). While differing in particular, and some contemporary scholars would say significant, respects from the more easily verifiable works of Arius – particularly Urkunden 1, 6 and 30 – they yet contain some useful points of similarity in language and thought. They must, however, as already noted, only be employed to confirm, never to prove.

The traditional view that Arius' monotheism was philosophical and not biblical, metaphysical and not ethical, and his God the Absolute of the philosophical schools – a view held quite widely until even recently – is now properly discounted. Gwynn provides a most useful summary of the thought of Arius in which he contrasts the words from his own letters with Athanasius' 'construction'. He notes with qualified approval Williams' observation that 'it is perhaps a mistake to look for one self-contained and exclusive "theological school" to which to assign [Arius]' (Williams 1987: 115) and Hanson's that Arius was 'basically eclectic' (Hanson 1988: 88) (Gwynn 2007: 187). He acknowledges

that the extant writings of Arius do not provide much material to show us what he actually believed, given that his letter to Eusebius is brief and designed more to refute Alexander than to promote his own views, and his two creeds are intended to secure recognition and reconciliation and therefore may, in Gwynn's words, 'tone down' his actual views in order to present himself in the best possible light (2007: 187). While not suggesting that the alleged extracts from the *Thalia* in Athanasius' writings are a foolproof guide to Arius' views, Gwynn looks at a number of claims in the *De Synodis* 15 accounts – which Gwynn regards as more reliable than those from the *Orationes* – and then compares them with what we do know from Arius' own hand.

Athanasius' claim that Arius taught that *God was not always Father* is not supported by the Arius documents. The Athanasian claim, however, that *the Son was not always* and that *he was not until he was begotten* is supported by reference to the letter to Eusebius where Arius declares that '[the Son] was not, before he was begotten' and repeats this in his letter to Alexandria. The claim that Arius taught the Son *was not from the Father but came also into existence out of nothing* is said only once by Arius, in the letter to Eusebius; yet he does say it there and does not contradict it elsewhere. He says that the Son 'is neither part of God nor from any existing being'. The claim that the Son *is not proper to the ousia of the Father* is thereby also confirmed from that same letter. Yet the claim of Athanasius that for Arius the Son *is a creature (ktisma) and a thing made (poiēma)* cannot be supported, at least not in the bare terms that Athanasius insists. For while Arius did teach that in some sense the Son is a creature, he also makes clear, in the letter to Alexander, that the Son ' is the perfect creature of God, but not as one of the creatures'. Athanasius' claim that Arius taught *Christ 'is not true God'* is probably true given that Arius avoids such language for the Son (Gwynn 2007: 192), but that *'by participation [he] was made God'* is nowhere supported in Arius' extant writings. The Athanasian claim that the Arian Son had an incomplete knowledge of the Father – *The Son does not know the Father exactly, the Son does not see the Father perfectly, the Word does not understand nor know the Father exactly* – is absent from the extant letters of Arius. The Athanasian claim that the Arian Son *is not the true and only Word of the Father but by no name only is called Word and Wisdom, and by grace Son and Power* has a 'degree of truth' to it according to Gwynn (2007: 193). Yet Gwynn acknowledges that this is only an Athanasian reading of Arius, for not even in the *Thalia* fragments does Arius suggest that the Son 'is therefore only Word and Wisdom "by name" or "by grace"'. Athanasius merely assumes that 'if the Son is not essentially God, then he cannot truly be called the Word, Wisdom or Power of God' (2007: 194). The Athanasian claim that the Son *is not unchangeable like the Father but is changeable by nature like the creatures* – what Gwynn calls 'this last and most controversial element of the construction of "Arianism" that both Alexander and Athanasius attribute to Arius' – is 'at face value openly false' (2007: 194). In his letters [to both Alexander and Eusebius of Nicomedia], Arius consistently distinguishes the Son from the other creatures and 'repeatedly and explicitly insists that the Son is "unchangeable"'. Gwynn concludes that while 'there are considerable elements of truth in Athanasius' construction of "Arianism"' – Arius does deny the eternity of the Son, he does describe the Son as a creature, he does 'explicitly reject' that the Son could be proper to the *ousia* of the Father, 'at least in one letter' refers to the Son as created out of nothing and avoids referring to the Son as 'true God', while the councils of both Antioch and Nicaea 325 seem to support some of these claims through their anathemas (*not eternal*, *out of nothing*, *alterable*) – there are 'an equally significant number of allegedly "Arian" principles that in fact derive not from Arius' words but from the polemical interpretations of Athanasius and Alexander' (Gwynn 2007: 195).

These include the claims that Arius taught the Son was God only 'by participation' and Word and Wisdom 'only by name and grace', and – 'most importantly' – the 'repeated charge that Arius rendered the Son mutable and reduced Him to the level of all other created beings' (2007: 195f.).

Gwynn concludes that while we can never know fully what Arius believed or taught, we can know that he did believe in *the One God, alone begotten, alone eternal*, that *the Son is God but not eternal and only-begotten*, and that *he cannot share in the essence of the Father* (2007: 201). For Arius *the Son is a creature but not like any other.* Arius' concern, says Gwynn in support of Christopher Stead, is 'to uphold the divinity of God the Father in the face of attempts to glorify the Logos . . . unduly' (2007: 202).

The 'Eusebians': the early period II (325–337)

A number of other gatherings, both in Alexandria and beyond, were then held to discuss the matter and the most important, before that of Nicaea itself, was a synod at Antioch in early 325. A letter from this council to Alexander of Thessalonica advised that 'Arius and his friends' were guilty of 'blasphemy . . . directed against our Saviour' and proceeded to advise what, for the synod, comprised 'the faith' (Opitz, Urkunde 18). This was to believe in:

> [o]ne God, Father almighty . . . and in one Lord Jesus Christ, only begotten Son, begotten not from that which is not but from the Father, not as made but as properly an offspring, but begotten in an ineffable, indescribable manner . . . who exists everlastingly and did not at one time not exist.

By way of a reversal of this language we can surmise what the synod thought Arius 'and his friends' taught. The synod went to anathematise all those 'who say or think or preach that the Son of God is a creature or has come into being or has been made and is not truly begotten, or that there was when he was not'. Those anathematised at Antioch for thereby 'having the same views as Arius' included Eusebius of Caesarea in Palestine. Then at Nicaea, not in its own time as pivotal as it was to become in later centuries, Arius was repudiated and the term *homoousios* introduced in its Creed, although

Figure 45.2 The Synod of Nicaea of 325 CE depicted in an icon from the Mégalo Metéoron Monastery in Greece, with the condemned Arius in the bottom of the image. Photo Wikimedia Commons; author Jensen

whether this term was in 325 as central as it eventually became later – or merely an explanatory term for the (at the time) more controversial phrase 'from the substance of the Father' – must await further discussion in this chapter.

Almost immediately after Nicaea, the tide began to turn for the foremost proponents of the Creed from there and its language – people like Eustathius of Antioch and Marcellus – and the growing fear that this language, particularly phrases such as 'from the substance of the Father' and *homoousios*, were open to modalist interpretation. This raises the question as to whether in the first half of the fourth century the centre of the so-called 'controversy' was actually opposition to the thought of Arius 'and his (powerful) friends' or to that of Marcellus, Eustathius and their 'friends', such as Athanasius. By the end of the 330s, Athanasius had begun to identify and to name those whom he claimed were the instigators and drivers of a theology which stood over against Nicaea as participants in an 'Arian conspiracy' (*Epistula Encyclica* of 339). Those whom Alexander, a decade or more earlier, had described as 'apostates', instigators of a 'Christ-fighting' and 'Arian' heresy (Urkunde 4b), Athanasius identifies as 'gathered around the Eusebii'. Alexander, in his encyclical, had himself referred to both the 'associates of Arius' and those 'of Eusebius [of Nicomedia]' – Alexander makes no reference in this letter to Eusebius of Caesarea – but as two distinct, though associated, groupings. And yet, even here, as Gwynn makes clear, Alexander's focus, unlike that of Athanasius, is on the one Eusebius and not both (2007: 68f.). Athanasius himself does not begin to reference 'the Eusebians [plural]' until after Tyre 335 (Gwynn 2007: 69). Athanasius' construction of an 'Arian-Eusebian party', however, soon begins in part to shape the way in which the period is explored, both in the fourth century itself and into modern times. Who then were these 'Eusebians', or were they a construct of Athanasius' own imagination? Gwynn makes clear that every use of the term 'the Eusebians' is in a polemical context (2007: 104); this does not make the existence of such a group in the fourth century unlikely, of course, but it does lay it at least open to serious question. Three passages in the *Apologia Contra Arianos* offer some names of those, almost exclusively bishops, whom Athanasius regards as the 'Eusebians', or 'those gathered around Eusebius' of Nicomedia. They include Eusebius himself, Ursacius of Singidunum and Valens of Mursa. Strangely perhaps, the 'other' Eusebius, of Caesarea, never appears in any of the 'catalogues' of those persons whom Athanasius condemns for their 'Eusebian' or 'Arian' sympathies. His reference to 'associates of the Eusebii [the plural]' must point to the bishop of Caesarea as one target, albeit an understated one. Yet there is no 'party' here; merely a collection of bishops and theologians concerned at the way in which the relationship between Father and Son was articulated by some of the more radical supporters of the language of Nicaea in 325 – *from the being of the Father* and *homoousios* – as close to if not outright Sabellianism/modalism. While some little is known of those whom Athanasius names as 'Eusebian' at various points, it might be particularly useful at this point to look at what the two *Eusebii* and perhaps Asterius, the Sophist, alleged members of the so-called 'School of Lucian', taught.

The 'School of Lucian'

In his letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia, Arius refers to Eusebius as a 'fellow-disciple of Lucian'. This, and sundry references in later writings, has led some scholars to speculate about a 'Lucianist School', one based on the teachings of this Lucian (born *c.* 230, martyred in 312). Williams remarks that those identified in 'Nicene' writings as the 'Eusebians' are 'roughly the same group as the group identified as pupils of Lucian of Antioch' (1987: 63). Gwynn points out that 'surprisingly little is actually known about Lucian of Antioch or his teachings' (2007: 203). His identity itself, Gwynn points out, 'is a controversial subject' and our knowledge of his teaching 'derives from later sources of highly doubtful value' (2007: 203). None of those, with the exception of Arius, makes any claim to be his 'disciple' and Lucian himself remains an enigmatic figure and his significance for this crisis is unknown. My own view is that Arius himself – as part of his desire to present himself as a traditionalist standing in a clear, historical line – attached his own name, and that of the bishop whose support and protection he sought, to that of a revered martyr.

Asterius the Sophist

While for most of those named as 'Eusebians' very little evidence of their teachings remains, this is not true for either Asterius, the so-called 'Sophist' (d. 341), or for Eusebius of Nicomedia himself. That there are similarities between what we know of Arius' actual beliefs and those of Asterius and Eusebius is clear; that there are significant differences is also true. Much of what we might know of Asterius' thought stems from fragments preserved by both Athanasius and Marcellus, with the former focussing on his alleged teaching of the priority of the Father and the latter on his teaching of the three hypostases (Gwynn 2007: 207). Yet evidence coming from hostile sources is potentially tainted and I am less comfortable than Gwynn might seem in his reconstruction of Asterius' thought. Both 'Arianism' and the thought of Asterius as we might know them are largely constructions of their enemies. Gwynn sees no explicit evidence that Asterius ever used the phrase 'there was when [the Son] was not' yet he clearly shared Arius' view that 'the Son is not eternal as is the Father, but is generated "before the ages"' (2007: 207). And like Arius he argued that even if the Son were not eternal the Father might yet always be Father, if only *in potentia*. He also shared Arius' notion that Christ was not 'true God' and the doctrine that 'the Son could not be materially generated from the Father's essence' (2007: 207). Asterius did, however, speak of the Son as a creature (*poiēma*) – unlike Arius – but also spoke of Him as unique as the only-begotten of the Father. Neither is there any evidence that Asterius spoke of the Son as mutable or as created out of nothing. His 'most notorious doctrine', however – and one not taught by Arius – was that the Son was not the true Wisdom and Power of God. Yet even this, as Gwynn acknowledges, is the interpretation of Athanasius and Asterius' supporters later defended him on this matter. The Son is still exalted above all other creatures, consistent with the known teaching of Arius. Yet, what Gwynn sees as significant differences with Arius – that Asterius did not teach 'there was when [the Son] was not', '[the Son] came to be out of nothing', and that the Son did not perfectly know the Father' – may not have been taught by Arius. Asterius' teaching that there are three hypostases, and that 'the Father is truly Father and the Son truly Son, and the Holy Spirit likewise' would sit, however, quite comfortably with what we know of Arius' thought.

Eusebius of Caesarea

Following his anathematisation by his bishop, Arius fled to Nicomedia and his teachings were declared orthodox by a synod in Caesarea of Palestine. This Eusebius initially pleaded with Alexander to take Arius back. He clearly saw himself as a conservative defender of a traditional theology, much as Arius himself did. His theological reflection and activity were, like those again of Arius, as much reactive as proactive. He had been condemned at Antioch 325 and, perhaps defensively, formally supported the declaration at Nicaea 325 which he immediately, and with some trepidation, justified to his congregation at home. His theological work after Nicaea was more directed against Marcellus and Eustathius than against the language of Nicaea itself. If he seemed to support an 'Origenist' subordination of the Son as a 'second God', he had many colleagues. For many at the time, this was the only way to protect and defend the integrity of the Godhead in the distinction of Persons. He did not absolutely oppose the use of the *homoousian* but would not allow it to be understood in a material or modalist sense.

His letter to his congregation is important for it perhaps reflects what the original 'Arianism' was about. Here he says that at Nicaea he presented his own creedal statement which spoke of the Son as *God from God*, and *before all the ages begotten from the Father*, and of the Father being 'truly Father', and the Son 'truly Son', and the Holy Spirit 'truly Holy Spirit'. He says that then the emperor himself asked the council to support this Creed as orthodox with the sole insertion of 'the single word *homoousios*' (which is unlikely). He then gives the Creed of Nicaea itself which shows that it is significantly different from his own and that it involves more than the single insertion of the *homoousian*. It includes not only that but also the 'from the *ousia* of the Father', 'begotten, not

made', and eight propositions anathematised. He defensively assures his congregation how these were to be understood. That of 'from the *ousia* of the Father' was to be understood as 'indicative of the Son's being indeed from the Father, yet without being as if a part of him'. 'Begotten, not made' he accepted, he said, because 'made' is an appellation common to the other creatures who came into being through the Son and to whom the Son had no likeness. The *homoousian* was accepted because it implied no division in the Monad, no alteration in the Father's *ousia*, and suggests 'that the Son of God bears no resemblance to the originated creatures'. The anathema against 'before his generation he was not' made clear that 'before he was generated in actuality, he was potentially with the Father ingenerately'. Eusebius could not accept the notion that the Father had created the Son. The Logos was, however, the first product (*gennema*) of all beings. The hypostasis of the Son is divine, but subordinate to the Supreme God. The Son worships the Father as God; therefore, the Father is God of the Son. The Son is God solely as the image of the true God though not in his own right (*De ecclesiastica theologia* 2.23). The Logos functions also as the intermediary of the Father for creating and governing the universe. For Eusebius, unlike for Origen, there is no eternal begetting and thus the begetting of the Son is not without beginning. The Son is not co-eternal with the Father (*De ecclesiastica theologia* 5.1.20). The Father is alone unoriginated. Yet the Son was not created 'out of the non-existent' (*De ecclesiastica theologia* 1.10) but is, somewhat vaguely, 'from the Father'. Eusebius clearly prefers the expression of the Son's divinity, however understood, to be in purely biblical terms.

Eusebius' view of God 'was especially informed by his radical understanding of the divine transcendence' (Robertson 2007: 39) and God's 'utter simplicity and otherness' mean that he can have nothing to do with the material world and, therefore, by implication, a Son who cannot be properly God. The Logos is, for Eusebius, only entitled to the name 'God' in a derivative sense (Robertson 2007: 52).

Eusebius of Nicomedia

The only extant letter from Eusebius that we have is that sent to Paulinus of Tyre in *c.* 323 (Urkunde 8) and all other fragments come from the writings of Athanasius whose trustworthiness in this is dubious. Eusebius clearly denies the eternity of the Son though this is found not in the letter to Paulinus but in the fragment from his reply to Arius and contained in Athanasius *De Synodis* 17. It can, however, be implied in the letter where the Son's beginning is incomprehensible but real. In what we have from his pen – either directly or through Athanasius – he does not employ the sentence 'There was when He was not' of the Son nor describe the Son as created 'out of nothing'. In the letter, however, he is clear that the Son was created – and therefore has a beginning – and cannot derive from the *ousia* of the Father, of the unbegotten, but is 'entirely distinct in nature and in power'. He is clear there that the Son cannot come from the *ousia* of the Father. Thus for this Eusebius, unlike for his namesake at Caesarea, the employment of the *homoousios* to define the relationship between the Father and the Son could never be acceptable. He is, as Gwynn remarks, opposed to any language which might 'compromise the immaterial nature of God' (2007: 214). Gwynn also comments that his denial, like those of both Arius and Asterius, that the Son can derive from the *ousia* of the Father is tied to his 'affirmation of the Son as a "created" being' (2007: 214). In the letter, Eusebius makes constant reference to the Son being 'created' and employs *Proverbs* 8.22 as a basic proof-text. As a creature, the Son cannot be from the *ousia* of the Father and must have been created solely by the Father's will. His status as a creature rules out any ontological union with the Father. His argument, however, is not that the Son as creature is as all other creatures, but that the Son must be created from the will of the Father and not from his *ousia*. The Son is a *ktisma* but is also set apart from the rest of creation. His nature is 'unchanging and inexpressible'. He speaks of his 'likeness' to the Father and of the Son as an 'icon' of the Father. This idea of the Son as 'icon' is shared with Asterius. There are thus both similarities and differences with and from Arius. As Gwynn points out, Eusebius [of Nicomedia], Asterius and Arius 'uniformly and

consistently subordinate the Son and deny that he is eternal or from the Father's *ousia*' (2007: 217). He further remarks that both Eusebius and Asterius 'avoid' Arius' description of the Son as created out of nothing and his alleged claim that the Son did not fully know the Father (2007: 218). They also place more emphasis on the unique divinity of the Son than does Arius. Both Asterius and Eusebius have more in common with Eusebius of Caesarea: they deny that the Son could exist co-eternally with the Father and describe the Son as the perfect creature apart from all other creatures.

Later 'Arianism': Arians, Semi-Arians and Neo-Arians (337–381)

In 337 Constantine died and was succeeded by his sons Constantius II in the east and Constantine II and Constans in the west. Constantius was a supporter of those who held reservations about the central language of Nicaea 325, and of Eusebius of Nicomedia in particular, while the western emperors were broadly supportive of those associated with Athanasius. Within a few years, most of the original protagonists were dead: Alexander by 328, Arius in 336, Eusebius of Caesarea by 340, and Eusebius of Nicomedia by 342.

In 341 a synod meeting at Antioch produced a number of statements, among them the so-called *Second Antiochene* or *Dedication Creed*. This Creed repudiated Arius – though neither he nor any alleged associates are actually named – and what he was alleged to have taught (especially the notions that time or season either is or has been before the generation of the Son, and that the Son is a creature as one of the creatures or an offspring as one of the offsprings). It spoke itself of the Son as 'only-begotten God' and as 'God from God', as 'both unalterable and unchangeable', of three *hypostaseis* – 'a Father who is truly Father, and a Son who is truly Son, and the Holy Spirit who is truly Holy Spirit' – and of these being 'three in subsistence and in agreement one'. There was no *homoousios*, no 'from the *ousia* of the Father', no 'begotten, not made'. Yet these should not necessarily be characterised as deliberate 'omissions' as this would imply that Nicaea 325 was the yardstick against which all other fourth-century documents until 381 were to be measured. Antioch 2 is subordinationist and anti-Arius, but also anti-Marcellan. Its authors struggle, like their predecessors, to make sense of the relationship of the Son to the Father.

In 343, at a synod meeting at Sardica in the west, the council condemned two bishops – Ursacius and Valens – whom it describes as 'born from the Arian asp' and alleges that these have claimed that both Son and Holy Spirit 'were crucified and slain . . . and died and rose again' and that they 'perniciously maintain' that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are 'of diverse and distinct *hypostaseis*'. The council itself declares that the 'Father has never been without the Son, nor the Son without the Father', and that it is 'absurd to affirm that the Father ever existed without the Son'. The Son 'was begotten' but 'before all things' and the 'ever-existent Word does not have a beginning'. The Word is 'true God, wisdom and power' and 'truly Son'. There is, they say, one God, for the Father and the Son are 'one [*hypostasis*]'. The Father is 'greater' than the Son but this is simply because the 'name' of the Father is greater than that of the Son. Socrates reports that the eastern bishops who had come to Sardica returned to Philippopolis and anathematised the term *homoousios* and 'inserted the *anomoean* opinion' into their correspondence. In return, those at Sardica condemned them, confirmed the Creed of Nicaea, rejected the term 'unlike', and 'recognised' the consubstantiality of the Persons (*HE*, 2.20.7–11).

A Creed adopted at Antioch in 345 – the so-called *Macrostich* or *Long-lined Creed* – sought to find a middle path and to repudiate what it saw as all extremist positions. It anathematised any suggestion that there were three Gods, or that Christ is not God, or that before the ages he was neither Christ nor Son, or that he is unbegotten, or that the Father begat the Son not by choice or will. It repudiates the notion that the Son is from nothing or from any subsistence before existing beside the Father, but that the Son comes from the Father alone. But it also makes clear that the Son is neither co-unbegun nor co-ingenerate with the Father, for the latter is these alone. It speaks not of three *hypostaseis* but of three *prosopa* and *pragmata*. But this, it says, does not make three Gods, for God the Father is alone

self-complete and unbegun and unbegotten and invisible. The Son is subordinate to his Father and God, yet is himself God perfect according to nature and true God. The Creed specifically condemns both Marcellus and Scotinus. This synod does not embrace all that Nicaea offered – and clearly repudiates any modalist tendencies – but it also repudiates what Arius was regarded – without naming him – as having taught as placing the Son too far from the Father and bringing into question his complete, if subordinate, divinity.

In 350 Constans died and Constantius became sole emperor. What has been called the 'Arian ascendancy' – or rather that which involved those who were, for the most part, most comfortable with speaking only of the Son as 'like' the Father – had begun and this lasted until the late 370s. But it is no longer helpful or correct to label these as 'Arian' or 'Semi-Arian'. In 351 a synod at Sirmium produced twenty-six anathemas; more than half (fourteen) were clearly anti-Sabellian, five 'anti-Nicene' and three opposed what have been termed extreme variations of Arianism. This in itself demonstrates that what concerned many of those in the 'ascendant' at this time was not the particular language of Nicaea in itself, but how that language might be employed to support a modalist understanding of the Trinity in that its advocates seemed to regard 'sameness' with less horror than they did utter separation. In 357, the *Second Creed of Sirmium* – called 'the Blasphemy' by Hilary (*De Synodis* 10) – shows these issues becoming clearer. Its authors claimed primarily scriptural authority for its language, made the claim that many are 'disturbed' by *ousia* language and declared that there should be 'no mention of *ousia* at all' as unscriptural. The Father is greater than the Son in honour, dignity, splendour, majesty and his very name. There are two *prosopa* of Father and Son and the Son is 'subordinated' to the Father. The Father [alone?] has no beginning and is invisible, immortal and impassible, while the Son has been begotten of the Father and is God from God. 'The Trinity must always be preserved' and 'complete and perfect is the number of the Trinity'. The issue is not so much *homoousios* or *homoiousios* but *ousia*. The underlying enemy is modalism. But if those associated with Basil of Ancyra – and primarily concerned with the potential modalism of the *homoousian* – were for a time allied loosely with the anti-*ousia* crowd, they now begin, for fear of what they see emerging among the latter, leaning back towards those gathered around Athanasius.

In 358, a gathering associated with Basil of Ancyra anathematised the phrase 'unlike in essence' depicting the Father-Son relationship. This grouping were clearly less troubled by the dangers of modalism than by the apparent separateness espoused by those now associated with Aetius and Eunomius for whom *ousia* language for the Father-Son relationship is not only unhelpful and misleading, but simply wrong. In 359, at Sirmium, under Valens, a fourth (or dated) Creed declared the Son to be 'like the Father in all things (*homoios kata panta*)' and it did so to make clear that *ousia* language for the Father-Son relationship had given 'offence' as it was not contained in scripture; for the scriptures do not refer to the *ousia* of Father or Son but do teach that the Son is 'like the Father in all things'. This formulation was confirmed at Seleucia in the same year and presented to the emperor at Nike and Constantinople in 359/360. The latter synod – allegedly under the influence of Valens, Aetius and Eunomius – adopted the phrase, but without the 'all things'. 'The world groaned', declared Jerome, 'to find itself Arian'! From now on, it seems, an alliance of the 'Athanasians' and the 'Basilians' – the former agreeing to live with trihypostatic language and the latter with the *homoousian*, each agreeably qualifying the other – led the way to Constantinople in 381.

In 361, Constantius died and was succeeded briefly by the pagan Julian. He was succeeded in 363 by the 'Nicaea'-leaning Jovian and he, in turn, by the 'religiously neutral' Valentinian I in 364 in the west and by the 'Homoian' Valens in the east. The target of the now *homoousian*/trihypostatic grouping was clearly Eunomius and this is evident from the significant number of *Contra Eunomium* writings. The Cappadocian Fathers – led by Basil of Caesarea – also now become major players on the anti-Eunomian side.

In 378, Valens was succeeded by Theodosius. The latter supported the language of Nicaea 325, and via Antioch in 379 and then Constantinople in 381, the terms and phrases 'begotten not made' and '*homoousios* with the Father' were enshrined and the full divinity of the Holy Spirit established,

though without the *homoousian*. Those previously associated with Aetius and Eunomius and their teachings – the so-called Neo-Arians – were marginalised and pushed to the geographical margins of the empire. We look now to the so-called 'Neo-Arians' beyond even the Homoian range.

Arian and Neo-Arian documents of the later period

Like those of Arius himself, the extant works of those claimed to be associated with his thinking in the later fourth century – Acacius of Caesarea, Eudoxius, Aetius or Eunomius – are few in number. The *Syntagmation* of Aetius, written towards the end of the 350s, defends the notion of a fundamental 'unlikeness' between Father and Son, while the extant writings of Eunomius – the *First* and *Second Apology* and the *Confession of Faith* – written between 359 and 383, are all that we have.

Those called the homoians

Those who found particular favour with emperor Valens and whom their opponents called *homoians* were really those – of generally moderate theological tendency – who believed that the use of any *ousia* language to describe the relationship between Father and Son, with its materialist, divisive and potentially modalist overtones, was always unhelpful; and that this was so whether it was the *homoousios*, the *homoiousios* (which no-one may have actually used), the 'from the *ousia* of the Father', or the *heteroousios* which was employed. They did not want to identify the Son particularly with the rest of creaturely existence, but did want to see in the Son an image or icon of the Father, properly if not essentially named 'God' but little more. They were generally not much interested in philosophical speculation but were most inclined to read the scriptures simply as had Arius himself. Apart from Acacius and Eudoxius, others identified with this *tendency* – for that it is all that it can be called – included Valens, Ursacius, Palladius of Ratiara and Auxentius of Milan. This tendency is best expressed in the Second Creed of Sirmium and that of Nike-Constantinople. In the west, the *Rule of Faith* of Ulfilas, the great missionary to the Goths, and the Creed supplied by Auxentius, were very influential among advocates of this leaning. They have some affinity with the thought of Eusebius of Caesarea. They disavowed the label of 'Arian' and claimed, as Arius had, to be upholders of the traditional faith of the Church. They held generally that the Son was begotten by the Father's will, that the praying of the Son to the Father demonstrated very clearly their relationship of subordination, and that the Father is simply Incomparable. They were, above all, in their own view, strict monotheists. Like Arius, they were concerned more to defend the status of the Father than to demote the Son's. For Acacius, the Son was the exact image of the Father in all respects save one; he is not unbegotten. And being the image he is 'like' the Father. But the Son is not God as the Father is God. Palladius spoke of a Trinity comprising the one high-God, one demi-God and a superior angel (the Holy Spirit), and of there being an ontological distinction between them. The Son was not created out of nothing but from the Father's will. There is a drastic subordinationism here. The Father is the God of the Son and the Son worships the Father. The Son is properly High Priest of the Father. Father and Son are alike in energy, power and activity but not in substance.

Those named as Neo-Arians

It can be said quite safely that it is no longer appropriate to name the group of churchmen and theologians associated with Aetius and Eunomius as 'Neo-Arian'. Neither is it helpful to label them 'Anomoian' or 'Heteroousian'. While both of these labels may say something apt of the *tendency*, neither says it all. And, indeed, many explicitly repudiated both 'anomoian' and any *ousia* label as defining the relationship between the Father and the Son. It is widely said that with both thinkers, 'non-Nicene' theology became a form of 'technology'.

Aetius

Aetius was the pupil of Paulinus of Tyre and came to Alexandria in 348 where he taught a young Eunomius. He associated with those opposed to Marcellus and Athanasius. He was famous for his use of syllogisms. With Aetius the central problem in the matter of the Father-Son relationship was whether a created ingenerate was logically possible, given that 'being caused' belonged to the very essence of the Son and that God's being named as 'Father' did not imply any participation by the Son

Figure 45.3 Sites and dates of councils and other major centres during the Arian controversy of the eastern empire

in his essence. The essential contrast was between the Ingenerate One (God) and the created/generated Son. Ingeneracy was, as for Eunomius, the very essence of God; that is, it is God. Therefore the Son, not being Ingenerate, cannot be God, and not being God, cannot be Ingenerate. Therefore the Son can be neither *homoousios* nor *homoiousios* to the Father. What matters above all else is 'knowing God'. Different names, e.g. Father and Son – indicate different natures. Names express realities and are not mere conventional symbols. The word 'Ingenerate' is not just one name among others for the Father, but his very essence. Neither is the word a mere privative, for then the Father would be non-existent, which would be absurd, or there would have to be a prior status – generatedness – which the Father would then lack. Aetius rarely mentions the Bible and the *Syntagmation* itself has only the one recognisable scriptural reference, that to *John* 17.3 at Proposition 37. The true God cannot beget and so cannot have a true Son. And God can only be known intellectually and cannot communicate himself. He is known only by being the *Ingenerate One*. Aetius primarily employs logic and employs neither *anomoios* nor – unlike Eunomius – *heteroousios*. All thirty-seven propositions in the *Syntagmation* concern the relationship of the Father and the Son. His is a radical monotheism. The Father alone is truly God.

Eunomius

Eunomius did not slavishly ape his teacher. He was not a strict believer in the Son being 'unlike' the Father – unlike Aetius who seems to imply it – but thought the Son like the Father 'according to the scriptures' but not in *ousia*. In his *Confession*, penned for the synod held in Constantinople in 360, he declares that the Son 'resembles his begetter with a most exact likeness in accordance with the meaning which is proper to himself' (3.27–28). He was apparently comfortable with the term *heteroousios* according to Kopecek who sees this implied in the *First Apology* 20 (1979: 330). As with Aetius, the true name and thus the true nature of the true divinity is the Ungenerated (*Second Apology* 382). God is therefore the Incomparable. This Ingenerate One cannot be compared with the Generate One and therefore the latter cannot be described even as *homoiousios* to the former (*First Apology* 9). The name Ingenerate, as with Aetius, is no mere privative. The Son is related only to the Father by the activity that produced him and is similar only to this. His likeness, therefore, is to the Father's activity and will, but not to his essence (*First Apology* 24). Father and Son are then 'alike'; but God and the Son can only be 'unlike'. But this activity of God is temporary and when it ceases so will its product. Every act of begetting has both a beginning and an end (*Second Apology* 224). God exists both apart and prior to the Begotten One and therefore the latter was not before his begetting (*Second Apology* 224). For Eunomius, God is the cause of all things and a cause *must* pre-exist what it causes. And, indeed, God cannot actually beget – for the *agennetos* cannot beget *gennetos* – but only create. The essence of the Son is *begotten(ness)* and this is both his *ousia* and *hypostasis*. Thus he cannot be either *homoousios* or *homoiousios* with the Father. Yet he was not, like other things brought into being, brought into existence 'out of nothing' (*First Apology* 15). The Son is alone 'direct' from the Father's hand, the 'perfect minister' of the whole creative purpose of the Father (*First Apology* 18), and 'like' the Father as to will but not as to essence (*First Apology* 18) and therefore not a real Son. The Fatherhood of God is an *energeia* and therefore separate from the Father's essence and temporary. There is therefore a fundamental distinction between God's *ousia* and his *energeia*. Thus, for Eunomius, the purpose is to protect the status of the true God, not to undermine the Son or reduce him to mere or ordinary creaturely status. Different names mean different realities. For Eunomius, not God but only the Son/Word became man. An interesting feature of Eunomian thought is that God can know no more than we can of his own essence. Thus God – and neither Athanasius nor Arius would say this – is knowable. Reason can tell us what we need to know. Yet Eunomius is deeply committed to scripture. Much of his work – unlike for Aetius – is exegetical.

Figure 45.4 Sites and dates of councils and other major centres during the Arian controversy of the western empire

Conclusions

An 'Arian' is either someone who – in apparent response to the modalist tendencies of some in the fourth century like Marcellus, Eustathius or Athanasius with their opposition to multi-hypostatic language, or to those synodal creeds the language of which left them open to a modalist interpretation like Nicaea 325 with its *homoousios*, or its 'from the *ousia* of the Father' – emphasised the primacy and fullness of the divinity of the Father, or a number of *hypostaseis*, or a 'beginning' for the Son and so on; or it is someone like Aetius or Eunomius who wished to emphasise the utter 'otherness' of the Father from the Son, or no-one at all! Is 'Arianism' merely a theological tendency? Is it merely a label with which to tar an opponent? Is it in fact even legitimate to talk of 'Arianism' at all? Is it time to consign it to the dustbin of history?

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46
MANICHAEISM

Jason David BeDuhn

Introduction

Although in many respects Manichaeism can and should be considered a distinct world religion, it belongs to the larger Christian tradition, broadly construed, through the special place it accords Jesus Christ in its ideology and devotional practices. Arising from the confluence of the early Christian mission with indigenous religious elements of third-century CE Mesopotamia, the Manichaean religion can be understood as a distinctively 'oriental' or 'Asiatic' expression of the Christian tradition, and therefore as an alternative form of the faith in comparison with the western, Hellenized version which has been historically regarded as the Christian mainstream. From these parallel processes of regional formation emerged a battle over the legacy of Jesus as both of these Christianities sent missions into the territory of the other, each claiming to be the true disciples of Jesus. In its ideological, liturgical, and institutional independence from other forms of Christianity, as well as in its remarkable geographic and historical extent, Manichaeism can be considered the great divergent offspring of the Christian tradition.

Mani (216–277 CE), the Aramaic-speaking founder of Manichaeism, consistently identified himself as 'the apostle of Jesus Christ' in his own writings. This is just a handy example of a much larger set of data that makes it unquestionable that one of the key catalysts in the formation of Manichaeism was the initial Christian missionary enterprise in Mesopotamia. Mani's father joined a sectarian community connected to the Elchasaite tradition, and Mani was raised in that environment in the 220s and 230s CE. He would come to identify himself in some contrast to this prior local Christian hybrid, as he made contact with other Christian communities that had formed differently in neighboring environments. These included Marcionites, to be sure, as well as adherents of Bardaisan. The presence and influence of 'gnostic' forms of Christianity in Mani's world is more difficult to establish, and the few points of contact between them and Mani's own system are more likely to go back to regional and parabiblical mythologies serving as antecedents to these two distinct Christian movements.

Mani's novel understanding of the Christian traditions he had been exposed to, informed by personal visionary experiences, along with his evident leadership and organizational skills, ultimately produced a solidification and institutionalization of a form of Christianity fitted to its cultural environment. Crucially, Mani endeavored to extend the range of the environment within which his form of faith would be accepted. He journeyed out of Mesopotamia onto the Iranian plateau, coming into contact with Zoroastrians, as well as by sea to India, where he encountered Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains. As a consequence of this extension of Mani's missionary field, these other

religions provided the cultural milieu within which Mani construed the Christian tradition, just as other Christian leaders of the time worked within a milieu informed by Jewish and Greco-Roman religious cultures. Mani's particular synthesis stabilized and became a new 'norm,' a new 'orthodoxy' capable of resisting and rivaling the claims coming from the west, and in turn colonized the west as a rival claimant to Christian identity.

Mani, therefore, did not reject some existing 'orthodox' Christianity and impetuously veer off into innovation. By the time something like a proto-Nicene Christian orthodoxy came into Mani's field of vision, his own church was already far along in its institutional development. That first encounter likely resulted from the forced relocation of inhabitants of Antioch to Mesopotamia following successive sacks of the city by the Persian emperor Shapur I in 256 and 260 CE. As these displaced Christians began to organize themselves in their new homes, they ran up against the locally dominant form of Christianity headed by Mani, and the two groups began to circle and assess each other in terms of rival orthodoxies. Hence, two forms of Christian faith spread alongside one another in competing missionary enterprises that eventually took both groups across the Asian continent to the Pacific shore of China. Along the way, both the 'Nestorian' Church of the east and the Manichaean church enjoyed periods of regional political support and sponsorship, the Manichaeans most especially from the successive Uygur empires in Central Asia from the mid eighth to the eleventh centuries. Reaching China, the Manichaeans survived a major persecution in the mid ninth century to establish a thriving Sinicized community in southern China. Driven out of Europe, North Africa, and West Asia by state persecution encouraged by Christian, Zoroastrian, and Islamic authorities, the Manichaeans persisted in China until the seventeenth century, when the last traces of organized Manichaeism fade away.

Jesus in Manichaeism

Manichaeism belongs to the larger Christian tradition not only in its historical origins, but also in its continued attention to Jesus as a central figure of its ideology and devotional culture. The complexity of Jesus' place in Manichaean tradition should not obscure the overall unity of the various ways he appears there, rooted in their common derivation from the Jesus narrative known to mainstream Christians and Manichaeans alike, combining both suffering and exaltation, victimization and triumph (Gardner 1991: 85).[1] In the historical development of Manichaeism and its regional variation, we see the figure of Jesus expanding and contracting in its roles, depending on the setting and the manner of synthesis with local religious traditions. In the increasingly Christianized west, the Manichaean Jesus absorbed attributes and functions that in other regions were parceled out among a dozen or so divine figures (Sundermann 1992: 85). Nonetheless, devotion to Jesus in one form or another is a constant. Manichaeans consistently prayed to Jesus as an active savior, and so came to associate him with the sun and moon towards which they faced in their daily prayers.[2] Evidence for reverential devotion to Jesus on the part of the Manichaean faithful comes not only from hymns and the adopted religious names of adherents, but also from newly identified Manichaean devotional paintings of Jesus from Central Asia and from China, the latter showing his continued prominent place in the latest, most far-flung Manichaean community a millennium after the religion's foundation (Gulácsi 2009; Figure 46.1).

Mani saw the figure and story of Jesus reflected at every stage of salvation history. Jesus' suffering and crucifixion—a narrative well-known and often repeated in Manichaean texts (Morano 1998)—provided the imagery for a mythological drama of cosmic proportions, even as his instructions offered the formula by which Manichaeans believed world suffering could be resolved. In the words of Iain Gardner, in Manichaeism 'historical features of Christ have become universalized out of specific time and space, and made applicable to the totality of the divinity, whether needing to be redeemed or redeeming' (Gardner 1983: 32–33; cf. Böhlig 1983). This dual attention

Figure 46.1 Manichaean silk painting of Jesus, twelfth- to thirteenth-century southern China. Seiun-ji, Kofu, Japan. After Gulácsi 2009

to Jesus as both paradigmatic victim and foremost liberator provides the foundation of a Manichaean Christology that finds its elaboration in the idea of Jesus as *salvator salvandus*, the savior who is himself saved (Franzmann 2003: 48).

At several points, these conceptions of Jesus as both savior and saved make contact with beliefs about him found in mainstream Christianity at either the official or popular level. Yet collectively they form a unique and strikingly alternative understanding of the nature and purpose of Jesus in the universe and in the life of the individual Manichaean believer. Manichaeism shares with mainstream Christianity an interest in Jesus' intimate identification with those who need to be saved, 'not unable to sympathize with our weakness, but tested in every way like us, apart from sin' (Hebrews 4:15). But from that common concern arise two radically different Christologies: on the one hand, the orthodox 'Two-Nature' Christology by which the transcendent Son of God 'assumes' the human Jesus; on the other, the Manichaean belief that no difference in kind exists between the divine nature and the soul in need of salvation. The latter, resident in all living things, belongs in its essence to the heavenly realm and shares a common nature with the forces sent from heaven to rescue it. Manichaeism in this way erases the gulf separating God and creatures, savior and saved, insisted upon by mainstream Christian dogma. In his one single nature, Jesus both encapsulates the plight of the imprisoned soul in this world and represents the totality of divine power active in redeeming it.

As *salvandus*, the saved, Jesus shares a common nature with all living things, the essence of life. This divine life-force has entered into a condition of mixture with contrary negative forces in the creation of the cosmos, as part of the conflict of Good and Evil within which Manichaeism interprets all experience. The mixture of these two antithetical properties yields the material world as we experience it, in which we suffer in our true divine identities as we are afflicted by contact with and dominated by Evil. Manichaeans at times characterize this state as one of 'crucifixion,' and refer to the soul entrapped everywhere on earth as the 'light cross' (Böhlig 1978; Klimkeit 1979; Gardner 1991: 80–82). 'The cross of light that gives life to the universe, I have known it and believed in it; for it is my dear soul, which nourishes every man, at which the blind are offended because they know it not' (*Psalm-Book* 86.27–29). Similarly, the Coptic Manichaean Sunday Psalms state: 'He was suspended on the cross in the likeness of the soul that is in the universe,' and 'When Christ rose from the dead, he revealed the type of the soul that is in the whole world' (Wurst 1996). From the widespread use of crucifixion imagery in the religion's ideology, Enrico Morano has concluded that:

> It is evident that the suffering and death of Jesus were to the Manichaeans important images of the suffering of the Living Soul bound to the *hyle*, and his resurrection refers to the liberation of the soul and its return to the Realm of Light.
>
> *(Morano 2000: 398)*

Manichaeans regard the suffering and death of Jesus, therefore, as prototypical of the suffering of all living beings. Jesus is born, suffers, and dies in plants daily (Evodius, *De fide* 34); Jesus' silence before Pilate is said to be illustrative of the silence of plants as they are harvested, despite their suffering (*Homilies* 91.28–32). In the *Cologne Mani Codex*, Mani's prophetic predecessor Elchasai, 'having taken soil from that earth which spoke to him, wept; he kissed (it) and placed (it) upon his breast and began to say: "This is the flesh and blood of my lord"' (*CMC* 97.3–10). Far removed from an environment with a significant Christian cultural presence, the medieval Chinese Manichaean *Hymnscroll* reflects the same view when it identifies that the living elements constituting the divine soul trapped in the world are 'the flesh and blood of Yishu' (*Hymnscroll* 252–254). Consequently, the Manichaean Faustus explains to his Catholic opponents that 'you attach the same sacredness to the bread and wine that we do to everything' (*Faust.* 20.2). Faustus famously coined the expression *Iesus patibilis*, 'the vulnerable Jesus,'[3] to capture this aspect of Christ's identity.[4]

The Manichaeans gave a new understanding to human experience by assuming its close correlation to Christ's. The African Manichaean Fortunatus highlighted the instruction given by Paul in

Philippians 2:5: 'Think with respect to yourselves that which also (you think) with respect to Christ Jesus,'[5] followed by an outline of Christ's descent into human form, his suffering and death, and his resurrection and ascent to glory. Fortunatus draws the inevitable conclusion:

> We have this same thought about ourselves, then, as about Christ who, though he was established in the form of God, became subject even to death in order to show his likeness to our souls. And just as he showed the likeness of death in himself and that, having been raised up from among them, he is in the Father and the Father is in him, so we think it will also be the same way with our souls. For we shall be able to be set free from this death through him.
>
> *(Augustine,* c. Fort. 7*)*

It followed for the Manichaeans that Jesus revealed an essential identification between the divine and the human when he, the Son of God, repeatedly referred to those he was calling as, likewise, sons and daughters of God.

As *salvator*, the savior, Jesus is the 'the releaser and redeemer [of] all souls' (*Kephalaion 29*, 82.20–21), and the personification of an awakening infused directly into the benighted fragments of divine light within us (Alexander of Lycopolis, 4; Augustine, *c. Faust*. 20.2). While other emanations of God undertook the initial defense of the Realm of Light, and the subsequent construction of the cosmos as the sphere in which the forces of Evil could be neutralized, Jesus oversees the final, salvational phase of cosmic history, assessing the state of mixture with Evil, and implanting in each fragment of divine light a potential responsiveness to its future summons to liberation (*Kephalaion 19*, 61.17–28). He served as the primordial revealer to the first human couple, Adam and Eve,[6] and continues as the inspiring force behind all subsequent messengers of God who have brought truth into the world throughout time (Franzmann 2003: 40ff.). As 'the introducer and guide and reliance, the original form and appearance of all the Buddhas, the king in the mind of all the wise, the real and true comprehension of all precious and solemn ones' (*Hymnscroll*, 16–19), as 'the father of all the apostles' (*Kephalaion 28*, 80.18–19; 73, 179.10–11), Jesus plays an active role throughout salvation history. Jesus stands apart from all such human teachers in Manichaean belief, even while serving himself as the historical prophet to 'the west' in the first century CE.

As the historical Jesus, he has the unique distinction among the historical messengers of coming as an entirely spiritual being, without the typical human body made up of a mixture of good and evil. Whereas in orthodox Christology Jesus' possession of a human physical existence served a vital function in the redemptive purpose of his atoning death, Manichaeans rejected the atonement theory of Jesus' death. The divine nature in human beings, along with all living things, is not alienated from God by sin, but victimized by sinful impulses resulting from entanglement of the two natures of Good and Evil. For that reason, Manichaean sources scoff at talk of 'two natures' in Jesus,[7] since they did not share the distinction of divine from human, creator from creature, and considered Good and Evil to constitute the only 'two natures.' Jesus took on the appearance (*schēma*) of a mortal body, mixing these two natures only in order to interact with human beings and effectively communicate his message and example to them. Yet, by this characterization, the Manichaeans apparently did not mean to deny that Jesus could suffer since, as we have seen, the divine nature itself is liable to suffering. In the words of Majella Franzmann, 'Otherness, in relation to ordinary humanity, is not a means by which Jesus avoids suffering' (Franzmann 2003: 75).

Despite this, some Manichaean texts speak as if Jesus did not possess the sort of body that could be grasped or injured, so no actual crucifixion took place. Other sources allude to the substitution of another on the cross, the worldly messiah Jesus son of Mary or even Satan himself (Evodius, *De fide* 964.7–10; *Psalm-Book* 123.5). Gardner has shown the complex pedigree of such alternative ideas of what really happened at the crucifixion in the diverse range of Christianities predating Manichaeism (Gardner 1988). Because Manichaeans viewed Jesus' suffering as primarily communicative and didactic,

there was little pressure to resolve these inconsistencies, as it was irrelevant to this function whether the historical Jesus suffered in his own person as a divine being, or merely conveyed the suffering of those parts of the divine trapped in mixture with Evil. The true suffering of the 'Son of God' is the universal suffering of all souls, revealed to the world through 'the mystic nailing to the cross, emblematic of the wounds of the soul in its passion' (Augustine, *c. Faust.* 32.7).

Jesus also served as a moral preceptor in the Manichaean tradition. The *mandatum Christi*, mandate of Christ, provided the formula for living a holy life guided by love, compassion, and service that remains always valid, even if the community he founded strays from them (Augustine, *c. Faust.* 32.7; Franzmann 2003: 61–62). The African Manichaean leader Faustus staked his claim to be an upholder of 'true Christianity' on his literal adherence to the values of the Sermon on the Mount (Augustine, *c. Faust.* 5.1–3), which the Manichaeans developed into a detailed code of conduct for their sacerdotal class, the Elect. In doing so, he was issuing a challenge to others who laid claim to being the 'church' of Christ. According to Manichaean teaching, that separate church had already run its course by the time Mani received his calling as Jesus' successor in 240 CE. Now the new church of Mani would 'complete the work,' drawing to it the heritage of all former messengers and their communities. Mani was the 'great interpreter' who gave definitive understanding to the teachings of Jesus, and henceforth Christ's revealing activity would operate through the Manichaean community, until the world's end.

Mani the 'apostle of Jesus Christ'

Efforts to recover the historical Mani must contend with the natural processes of idealization which take hold of every founder of a religious community. Through the ironic loss of most of his own writings, which he hoped would safeguard his teachings from alteration, the Mani available to modern history is mostly the Mani imagined by the subsequent Manichaean church, which undoubtedly elevated him to a status well beyond his own self-understanding. Mani saw himself as 'the apostle of Jesus Christ,' an epithet employed in his letters and carved on the crystal seal, recently argued to be the very one with which he would have authenticated those letters (Gulácsi 2010; Figure 46.2):

He desired to conduct his life 'according to the image of our lord Jesus' (*CMC* 107.12–14), and in an unintended way completed that imitation in his martyrdom. Yet Mani expanded his apostleship in two key ways: first, by understanding himself as the unique interpreter and reformer of a Christian tradition already mired in corruption two centuries after its founding, and second, by placing the Christian tradition within a universal history of divine revelation, for whose interpretation and reform he likewise had responsibility.

According to a well-known and widely distributed prophecy, Jesus had promised to enrich and safeguard the truth he had begun to impart to his followers by sending them the Paraclete. Mani believed that he had been the recipient of the fulfillment of this prophecy:

> The living Paraclete came down to me. He spoke with me. He unveiled to me the hidden mystery, the one that is hidden from the worlds and the generations, the mystery of the depths and the heights. He unveiled to me the mystery of the light and the darkness; the mystery of the calamity of conflict, and the war, and the great . . . battle that the darkness spread about. Afterwards, he unveiled to me also how . . . through their mingling this universe was set up . . . He opened my eyes also to the way that the ships were constructed, to enable the gods of light to be in them, to purify the light from creation. Conversely the dregs and the effluent . . . to the abyss . . . Also the mystery of the apostles who were sent to the world, to enable them to choose the churches. The mystery of the Elect, with their commandments; the mystery of the catechumens their helpers, with their commandments; the mystery of the sinners with their deeds, and the punishing that lies hidden for them.

> This is how everything that has happened and that will happen was unveiled to me by the Paraclete . . . everything the eye shall see, and the ear hear, and the thought think . . . I have understood by him everything. I have seen the totality through him.
>
> (Kephalaion 1, *14.32–15.23)*

Called in this way to be 'the apostle of Jesus Christ,' Mani broke with the Elchasaite community of his youth, and sought to guide an initially small circle of followers in the true religion.

Yet Mani broadened his concept of prophetic succession in a manner unknown in other forms of Christianity, and comparable instead to later Islamic views. He proposed that all regions of the earth had received revelation from God through prophetic spokesmen, including Zarathustra in Iran and the Buddha in India. Mani apparently saw himself as the last of these figures, and the one destined to explain previous revelation and purge it of error accumulated in the course of its transmission. He came to be seen by his followers as the fulfillment of promises made by Jesus, Zoroaster, and the Buddha of a future reformer and perfecter of their respective teachings. Despite his own words of

Figure 46.2 Crystal seal stone of Mani, with inscription m'ni šlyḥ' dyyšwʿ mšyḥ' ('Mani apostle of Jesus Messiah'), mid third-century Mesopotamia. INT. 1384 BIS. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France. After Gulácsi 2010

being guided himself by the Paraclete, he was identified with the Paraclete after his death (*Psalm-Book* 3.21; 9.3; 17.28; 20.21; 22.28; 24.14, 17; etc.), as well as with the future Buddha Maitreya looked for in Buddhism (Klimkeit 1993: 162–163), and probably also the Zoroastrian Soshyans, although an explicit statement to that effect is lacking in the known sources. There is room in Manichaeism for literature about prior religious heroes, and for religious art portraying these great forebears, both reflecting a degree of reverence. Yet since those messengers before Mani did not write down their teachings, but instead trusted to oral transmission, the forces of Evil found an opportunity to corrupt and distort their message. Thus it fell to Mani to provide the final and definitive rendition of truth, safeguarded by his own writings and works of art.

Intrinsic to Mani's place as the successor of previous prophets is the claim that he is the guardian of their teachings and their legitimate interpreter. Mani himself enunciated the limitations and shortcomings of prior religious traditions, and offered Manichaeism as a correction and perfection of them:

> First, the religions of the ancients were (spread) in one land and one language. But my religion is such that it will be manifest in all lands and in all languages and will be taught in distant lands. Second, the older religions were (in order) as long as there were holy leaders in them . . . but when the leaders were raised up, their religions became confused, and they became slack in (observing the) precepts and in works . . . But my religion, by virtue of its living scriptures, (its) teachers, bishops, elect and auditors, and by its wisdom and deeds will endure to the end. Third, those souls of the ancients who did not complete (good) works in their own religion will come to my religion, and for them it will truly become the door of salvation. Fourth, this revelation of the two principles and my living scriptures, my wisdom and my knowledge, are more encompassing and better than those of the former religions. Fifth, as all scriptures, (all) wisdom and (all) parables of the former religions [have been added] to my religion.
>
> *(Klimkeit 1993: 216–217)*

The errors that crept into the teachings of the Buddha, Zarathustra, and Jesus as they were transmitted from one generation to the next were the result of the fact that these prophets spoke metaphorically and figuratively, and that they trusted their words to the oral medium. These circumstances left it to Mani to reform world religion by rendering its truths in precise, plain, literal language, and to commit this language to the written page. Mani's instruction renders the teachings of the past fully comprehensible for the first time. In praise of Mani, it is said:

> The beloved son, Jesus Christ, sets a garland on thy head in great joy, because his building that was destroyed thou didst build it, his way which was hidden thou didst illumine it, his scriptures which were confused thou didst set them in order again, his wisdom which was hidden thou didst interpret it.
>
> *(*Psalm-Book *12.26–33)*

But, of course, Mani's effort at a grand systematization of prior revelation had the ambition to follow Paul's dictum to take possession of all that was good in human wisdom:

> The writings, wisdoms, apocalypses, parables and psalms of the earlier churches are from all parts reunited in my church to the wisdom which I have revealed to you. As a river is joined to another river to form a powerful current, just so are the ancient books joined in my writings; and they form one great wisdom, such as has not existed in preceding generations.
>
> *(*Kephalaion 151*, 372.11–19)*

Needless to say, by uniting this great body of wisdom in his own system, he saw to it that its meaning was 'altered to the flavor' of the system as a whole (Sundermann 1985: 58–68).

As the 'great interpreter' who made all things plain and understandable, Mani used every means at his disposal to reach out and to inform. The Manichaean tradition is a religion of the book because Mani himself was a writer of books, something the Buddha and Jesus never did. 'For all the [apostles], my brothers, who have come before me, [have not written] their wisdom in books, as I have written it; [neither have] they painted their wisdom in the Hikon, as [I have painted] it' (*Kephalaion 151*, 371.25–30). As this passage indicates, Mani's religious revolution from the oral to the written medium was not his only didactic innovation; he also sought to convey his teachings in a visual medium, as Ephrem Syrus quotes him saying:

> I have written them in books and illustrated them with colors. Let the one who hears about them verbally also see them in visual form, and the one who is unable to learn them from [words] learn them from picture(s).
>
> *(Ephrem Syrus,* Hypatius *127, quoted in Reeves 1997: 262–263)*

Mani did not just paint individual pictures; he compiled a picture book that came to be treated as part of Mani's canon of scriptures, and its existence fostered and legitimated the Manichaean artistic tradition (Gulácsi 2015). At the same time, some Manichaean images (see Figure 46.3) illustrate the extent to which Manichaeism was also a 'religion of the book.'

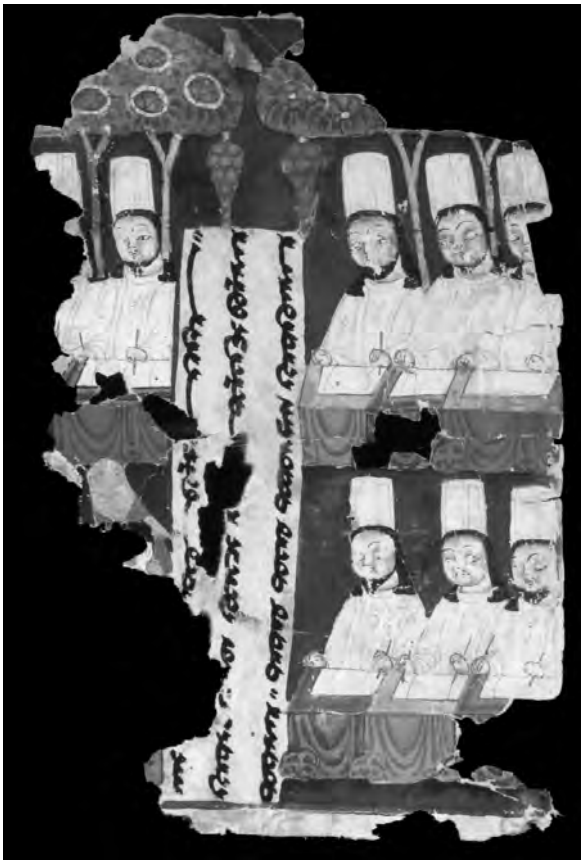

Figure 46.3 Manichaean codex folio illuminated with Elect copying books, shown in picture-viewing direction, tenth-century Kocho. MIK III 6368 recto. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst/Iris Papadopoulos

The Manichaean community incorporated Mani's martyrdom into its ideology and commemorated it in its practices. We find religious literature devoted to the subject, both poetic and prose, across the Manichaean tradition from North Africa to China. The details of Mani's last days are meticulously recorded: his journey to the Persian court, his audience with the shah Bahram, his imprisonment and suffering, the final visits of his disciples, the moment of his death, and its immediate aftermath. In its description of these events, the Manichaean tradition itself draws parallels to the death of Jesus. It likens the Zoroastrian priests to the Jewish leaders, Bahram to Pilate or Herod, Mani's death to Jesus' crucifixion, and Mani's apotheosis to Jesus' ascent (*Psalm-Book*, 43.5–44.1). The whole scenario comes across as a momentous clash of Good and Evil, and highlights the tragedy of Evil's great earthly power (*Psalm-Book*, 23.20–29). Yet Mani's martyrdom is ultimately a triumph and a liberation, just as Jesus' resurrection is a victory over death. Despite the literary convergence of Mani and Jesus, and the many analogies made to this end, Mani did not die by execution. Primary Manichaean sources agree that Mani died in prison, before Bahram could fully vent his hate upon him. In fact, Bahram is described as enraged that Mani has, as it were, slipped through his clutches, and he is suspicious of some sort of drug-induced deception being worked upon him (*Psalm-Book*, 17.4–17). Bahram is left only with Mani's body on which to work his rage (*Psalm-Book*, 23.32–24.3):

> You left them your body and ascended [to your] kingdom. The lawless ones were confounded, they brought their wrath upon your body. They shed your blood in the midst of the street of their city. They struck off your head and set it on high upon their gate.
>
> *(*Psalm-Book *44.13–20)*

Hence, Mani achieves a little victory in the long, painful struggle with Evil. Nearly crushed by his iron chains, the sixty-year-old apostle of light prays to God for a much earned release from his battles, and departs his body precisely at sunset after twenty-six days of imprisonment (*Psalm-Book* 17.21–28).

Mani's continued proximity to his beloved flock of followers is conveyed in the idea that he abides in the moon, and from there looks down upon the works and sufferings of his church. According to this tradition, 'the Parinirvana of the Apostle' was 'when he was raised up into the chariot of the moon and found peace with the Father, the God Ohrmizd' (Klimkeit 1993: 87):

> And in great joy he flew up, together with the bright gods that accompanied him on the right and the left . . . to the chariot of the Moon, the meeting-place of the gods. And he stayed there with God Ohrmizd, the Father.
>
> *(Klimkeit 1993: 215)*

Mani's presence in the moon was a powerful symbol of his lasting care and watchful gaze. The idea provided comfort to the Manichaean community in its travails, offered a sense of Mani's accessibility, and held out hope of his future return by what must have appeared to be a rather short and easy descent:

> The noble Lord fulfilled the promise which he gave us (when he said): 'For your sake I will wait above in the water chariot; I will send you help at all times.' Lo, already 110 years have now passed, since you, (oh) God, ascended to the assembly of Peace. Now the time has come that you should raise up the righteous and should establish your throne on high.
>
> *(Klimkeit 1993: 85–86)*

Mani's location in the moon meant that every Manichaean would face him in nighttime prayers, which were directed to the moon. In this way, Mani was the object of a daily practice of veneration and prayer.

The connections between the believer and the prophet received heightened emphasis on certain high holy days of the Manichaean liturgical year, in particular at the annual *Bema* festival, when the community commemorated Mani's release from the world. Mani's continued proximity in the moon was drawn even closer at this ceremony by the invocation of his presence into the community, and onto the judgment seat set up for him from which the ritual took its name. The community interacted with the seat as if he were truly present: he was addressed directly, and his all-seeing gaze was acknowledged in the community's confession of sin:

> The great exalted king is seated upon his Bema, he sees the deeds of each one of us . . . Our Lord the Paraclete has come, he has sat down upon his Bema; let us all pray, my brethren, that he may forgive us our sins.
>
> *(*Psalm-Book *21.27–32; 22.28–30)*

Iranian hymns show the same conception: 'You are come, lord Mani, on the throne he sits himself'; 'the noble apostle sits himself on the . . . throne' (Reck 2004: 144, 147). These hymns bear the unusual feature of being dated according to the number of years that had transpired since Mani's departure. The community was counting the years until their guide returned and brought an end to their earthly struggles in a glorious triumph. At that time, Mani's descent onto the Bema would simply be a prelude to his surrendering of authority to the true judge, Jesus.

The numerous accomplishments and roles of Mani pertinent to Manichaean belief and practice provided the impetus and content of a vast body of poetry and prose used in the worship of the Manichaean church. This literature recounts and celebrates Mani's teaching and guidance, both in person during his earthly career and less directly through his writings or supernatural influence after his ascent. In reciting his work as interpreter and reformer, author and illuminator, healer and ritual authority, as well as guardian and judge of his religious community, this literature makes a case for Mani as a savior figure who has fundamentally changed the world and made salvation possible (*Psalm-Book* 13.6–13):

> Lo, thy holy churches have spread out to the four corners of the world. Lo, thy vine-trees have filled every place. Lo, thy sons have become famous in all lands. Lo, thy Bema has been firmly established in every place [like a] river now that flows in the whole earth.
>
> *(*Psalm-Book *13.20–24)*

Manichaean biblical interpretation

Mani did not know or recognize the Bible as we now think of it; he lived before the fixing of a Christian canon, and was exposed to a broader, fluid Christian movement with a variety of written and unwritten authoritative traditions. Moreover, he critiqued the transmission of the Christian kerygma in a manner reminiscent of, and probably influenced by, Marcion. Consequently, Christian biblical literature held an ambivalent status within Manichaeism. Mani himself quoted the words of Jesus from the *Diatessaron* and other gospel sources, as well as making use of the writings of Paul. Werner Sundermann identified quotations from the *Diatessaron*'s Passion narrative in Iranian Manichaean sermons comparing Mani's suffering and death to Jesus' (Sundermann 1968). Zsuzsanna Gulácsi has demonstrated that painted scenes of the life of Jesus based on the *Diatessaron* were being copied and probably used in connection with the sermons like those identified by Sundermann in medieval Central Asia (Gulácsi 2008; Figure 46.4).

Yet these authorities came to be subordinated to Mani's own compositions as Manichaeism developed after him. Among Asian Manichaeans for the next thousand years, Jesus and Paul continue to be quoted in the form of isolated agrapha mostly dependent on Mani's own application and interpretation of this material. Only in the Roman empire did Manichaeans maintain and expand their

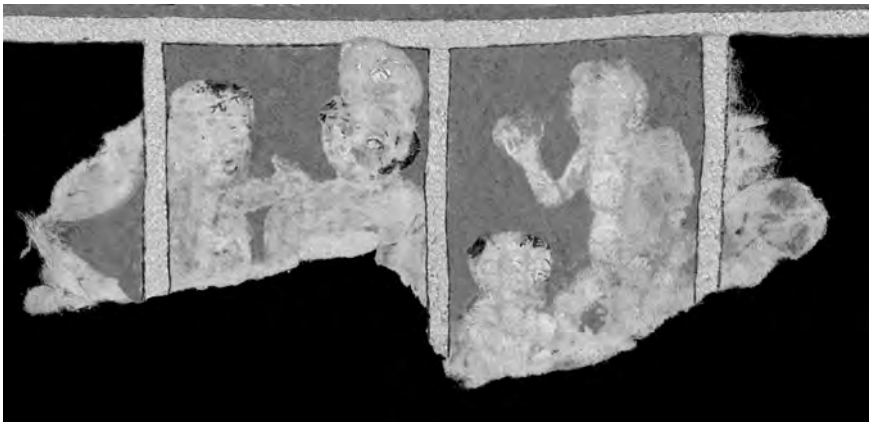

Figure 46.4 Manichaean codex folio illuminated with 'Judas Paid by Caiaphas' and 'Jesus Washing Peter's Feet,' two vignettes from the life of Jesus based on the Diatessaron, tenth-century Kocho. Detail of MIK III 4967a recto, with background and frames digitally enhanced. Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin, Germany. After Gulácsi 2008

founder's direct engagement with the emerging biblical canon, and come to terms with it as the battlefield on which to carry out their apologetic and polemical efforts to prove Manichaeism to be the true Christian faith.

Manichaean leaders within the Roman empire built on Mani's substantial foundation to produce a body of exegetical work that moves throughout the entire New Testament, and often shows remarkable facility and coherence.[8] Indeed, Manichaean biblical interpretation typically departs from orthodox readings precisely in those passages where ambiguity and multivalence have given rise to competing interpretations throughout Christian history. As we have seen, Mani articulated a programmatic reception of the world's sacred scriptures into a single 'great wisdom.' This position carried a key corollary: the individual scriptural traditions cannot be interpreted properly in isolation, but only when brought together and read through Mani's dualistic exegetical lens. Working from a self-consciously literate vantage point, Mani understood his role as God's messenger to entail a hermeneutical responsibility to clarify the meaning of prior scriptures. His followers stressed and perhaps expanded this character of Mani's mission, as Augustine of Hippo characterized their views:

> They say that the divine mysteries which the ancient writers set forth in figures in the scriptures were left to be resolved and revealed by this man who was going to come last. And they say that no teacher will come from God after him precisely for the reason that Manichaeus said nothing in figures and allegories. For he had made clear what the ancients had said in that way and plainly and openly revealed his own thoughts.
>
> *(Augustine,* c. Epist. fund. *23.25)*

As the promised Paraclete, Mani had the function to fill the deficit indicated by Paul's admission of incomplete knowledge (1 Cor 13:9f.).[9]

Mani shows no direct engagement with the Jewish Tanakh in any of the surviving passages certain to come from his own compositions. Unlike 'gnostic' writers, his creation account is not based on a direct exegesis of Genesis. Instead, Mani knew various parabiblical Jewish texts and traditions, especially the Enoch literature (Reeves 1992). This material supplied many details of Mani's rich mythology and complex cosmology: a dualistic conflict between Good and Evil throughout world history, armies of angels, multiple heavenly firmaments with God remotely transcendent above subordinate god-like authorities, beings imprisoned in the firmaments and falling from them to earth,

and so forth. From such literature, Mani accepted the Jewish patriarchs Adam, Seth, Enosh, Enoch, Noah, and Shem as messengers of God, with accounts taken from apocryphal developments of the spare biblical narratives, rather than directly from the latter.[10] Criticism of the Genesis creation account, and of the values reflected in the Tanakh generally, is a product of the Manichaean mission to the Roman empire, where it formed part of a polemic against a form of Christianity that had adopted the Tanakh as the Christian Old Testament.

Manichaeans followed Marcion in attributing the authorship of the Tanakh to a being different from and at odds with the God of Truth who sent Jesus.[11] Their critique rested upon a literal reading of the text, which yielded both logical and moral criticisms, as well as points of contradiction to positions taken by Jesus and other New Testament authorities. Manichaeans cited (1) New Testament passages critical of Old Testament principles, values, or doctrines (Augustine, *c. Fort.* 16; *c. Faust.* 8.1; 14.1; 32.1; *c. Felix* 2.10; *Acts of Archelaus* 44); (2) Old Testament passages incongruent with New Testament principles, values, or doctrines;[12] and (3) Old and New Testament passages juxtaposed in a way to illustrate antithetical positions (Augustine, *c. Faust.* 4.1). They also noted that, despite the avid avowal by orthodox Christians of the scriptural status of the Old Testament, these 'semi-Christians' hypocritically failed to actually keep its commandments (Augustine *c. Faust.* 6.1; cf. 22.2). Augustine of Hippo and other orthodox writers found it necessary to defend the Genesis creation account against a well-developed Manichaean critical analysis of it. In a missionary context, they could use this same analysis to raise problems in the narrative to which they proposed dualistic solutions. Contending that a good God would not create an evidently flawed world entirely on his own initiative, the Manichaeans argued that creation must be some sort of necessary response to an external stimulus that presented an even less satisfactory alternative. Such an external stimulus to creation explained why God, after an immeasurable eternity, suddenly created the world at a specific point in time (Augustine, *Gen. c. man.* 1.2.3, 1.4.7, 1.5.9; cf. *Conf.* 11.12.14).

New Testament texts fared much better in Manichaean estimation. Quotations from or allusions to gospel traditions and Paul's letters permeate the surviving fragments of Mani's own writings, and Paul's influence is evident as well in Mani's own epistolary style. Secondary scholastic literature such as the immense collection of *kephalaia*, preserved mostly in Coptic but also in important fragments of Iranian versions, attribute to Mani more discussions of biblical themes. New Testament passages are rarely cited verbatim, but form the subtext and provide language and imagery taken up into discussions of theology, creation, cosmology, and religious practice (Böhlig 2013: 65–71). The preserved fragments of the closing sections of Mani's *Šābuhragān* provide perhaps the most lengthy example of his reading and application of gospel material (MacKenzie 1979–80). This composition represents a conscious attempt by Mani to convey Jesus' eschatological teachings (including verbatim quotations of the *Diatesseron* passage corresponding to Matt 24:29–31; 25:31–46) through Iranian concepts and terminology.

While the Manichaeans recognized the authority of the words of Jesus, they did not extend the same status to the narrative frame within which they were embedded in gospel texts. This principle reflects the continuation within third-century Manichaeism of the attitude that had generally prevailed in Christianity as a whole in the second century. Early Christian writers cite the logia of Jesus as independent agrapha, without relying on the authority of gospel texts to lend them legitimacy (Petersen 2006). Mani did have access to written gospel material, such as the *Diatessaron*, but he and other Manichaeans questioned the authorship and reliability of this written gospel tradition. Anticipating the work of modern biblical scholars, they pointed to the period of orality in which the sayings of Jesus could have been altered in the course of transmission (*Kephalaia* Prologue 7.18–26; Augustine, *c. Faust.* 33.3), and questioned the motives and intentions of those who committed the traditions to writing (Augustine, *c. Faust.* 32.2). These same concerns applied to the scriptural texts of all prior religious traditions, and served to explain the differences among religious communities that Manichaeans believed went back to founders inspired by the same God with the same essential teachings (*Kephalaia* Prologue 8.8–10).

Consequently, Manichaean exegesis and application of gospel material centered almost exclusively on the words of Jesus. These provided what Faustus calls the *mandatum Christi*, a set of primarily moral guidelines, interpreted according to Mani's ascetical understanding.[13] For Faustus, the ethical precepts of the Sermon on the Mount, encapsulated in the beatitudes, constitute the 'gospel' in its essence and are the hallmark of the true Christian (Augustine, *c. Faust.* 5.1). This argument equated Christian identity with an ascetical ethic seen widely in second-century Christian literature, which Manichaeans could claim to carry forward with greater zeal than seen in the 'broad path' of the now established and ethically mainstream Catholic Church Faustus confronted, where orthodox belief took precedence over a distinctively Christian way of life.

Of course, Manichaeans found proof-texts for dualism in biblical literature, including Matt. 7:17f. (the two trees), Matt. 13:24ff. (the enemy who sows weeds among the wheat), John 1:5 (the blindness of darkness to the light sent into the world), and 2 Cor. 4:4 (the god of this world who blinds people's minds) (*Psalm-Book* 56.31; 172.26f.; *Acts of Archelaus* 15; Augustine, *c. Fel.* 2.2; *c. Faust.* 21.1). *Kephalaion 2* is entirely devoted to elaborating the two trees image in terms of the full Manichaean mythology, and *Psalm-Book* 134.11–20 interprets the root, trunk, branches, and fruit of the Good tree according to the Manichaean theology.[14] Manichaeans noted that the bad tree is said explicitly by Jesus to be 'not planted by my heavenly Father,' and to be destined to be rooted up and cast into the fire (Matt. 3:10; 15:13; Augustine, *c. Fort.* 14; *Acts of Archelaus* 15). The 'fruits' of Evil are distinguished from those of Good with reference to Gal. 5:19–22 (*Letter to Menoch* 177; *Acts of Archelaus* 19). The Gospel of John's sharp opposition of light to darkness finds repeated use in Manichaean texts.[15] Likewise, Paul's expressions of interior conflict (e.g., Romans 7–8; Gal. 5:17; Eph. 2:1ff.) were taken as confirmations of the dualistic underpinnings of human nature (Augustine, *c. Fort.* 16–17, 21; *c. Fel.* 2.2). The Manichaeans offered their unique view of human creation (fashioned by the forces of Evil in imitation of the divine image) as a reconciliation of Jesus' declaration of humans as the Devil's children (John 8:44) with Paul's affirmation that they bore the image of God (1 Cor. 11:7; Col. 3:9–10).

Manichaeans shared with their orthodox rivals a valuation of Paul above any other Christian authority other than Jesus, despite concerns over corrupting interpolation of his letters. When New Testament interpretation entered its Pauline era in the mid fourth century, the Manichaeans represented *the* major alternative reading of the apostle that orthodox exegetes confronted (Decret 1989). Every orthodox commentary on Paul from this period should be assumed to be responding to the Manichaeans either directly or indirectly. Paul supplied the Manichaeans with the terminology for and the characterization of their dualistic anthropology in such passages as Romans 6–7; Eph. 3–4; 1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 4:16; and Col. 3:9–10 (Böhlig 2013: 45–46). Manichaeans made much of Paul's rhetoric of rejection and condemnation of parts of our human identity, which he commands to be 'put off,' as only explicable in a dualist world view (e.g., Augustine, *c. Faust.* 24.1).

Paul's rhetoric of moral disability in such passages as Romans 7 set the terms for the distinctive Manichaean position on grace (Böhlig 2013: 44–45). In the pre-Augustinian period, the Manichaeans confronted an orthodox Christianity that emphasized free will. By comparison, the Manichaeans were charged with denying the freedom of the will and falling into a kind of determinism. A more careful reading of the Manichaean position reveals that it stressed the necessity of divine grace to overcome the inherent moral deficits of human nature, stemming from its 'mixed' pedigree from both Good and Evil (Augustine *c. Fort.* 11, 16, 21; *Nat. boni* 41). The Manichaeans cited Paul to this effect, and found correlations to other scriptures, such as John 15:22 (Augustine, *c. Fort.* 21), and Augustine was forced to yield ground to their reading, albeit reframed within a Nicene world view (BeDuhn 2013). The objections of his contemporaries within the Catholic Church highlight the degree to which this reading of Paul was seen as an innovation with suspect Manichaean roots.

Manichaeans constituted major players in Christian biblical interpretation between the third and sixth centuries, producing many intriguing readings of the New Testament, a number of which must be assessed as astute and insightful. Some of those readings even managed to work their way

into the orthodox interpretive tradition, not surreptitiously, but because major authorities such as Augustine of Hippo were forced to accept that their opponents had the better interpretation in spite of being 'heretics.'

Manichaean ecclesial life and organization

Mani set about creating the organization of his church by explicit imitation of Jesus, whose selection of twelve and seventy-two apostles was known to him through the *Diatessaron*. Mani invokes this precedent in the still unpublished Kephalaion 337 in the Chester Beatty Kephalaia codex. He explains there, moreover, how these numbers correspond to heavenly realities, as discerned on the basis of other sources by Claudia Leurini (Leurini 2009). On the basis of such models, Mani appointed 12 'Teachers' with authority over 72 'Bishops,' who in turn supervised 360 'Presbyters.' These church leaders in theory managed the entire network of Manichaean communities stretching across thousands of miles and multiple political territories. They answered to a supreme head of the church, the direct successor of Mani, situated in Mesopotamia until the late eighth century. The survival of this pope-like office thereafter is difficult to trace.

This church hierarchy oversaw a variety of liturgical offices, as well as the entire number of ascetic, itinerant 'Elect.' Men and women Elect eschewed family, home, sex, and property to carry forward the Manichaean mission, to hear confession and grant absolution, and to serve a key ritual function in the daily sacred meal. At times invoking the Sermon on the Mount as the foundation of their way of life, they followed a strict code of absolute non-harm, not only of their fellow human beings, but also of animals and plants. Only in the ritual context of the sacred meal were they allowed to eat vegetarian food harvested and prepared by others. The vast majority of Manichaean adherents did not seek Elect status, but remained 'Auditors' or 'Catechumens,' in which role they undertook periodic fasts and vigils, regular confession of sins, and support of the church and its ritual observances. Through a belief in reincarnation, they could aspire to find the self-discipline to become Elect in a future life. In the meantime, they adhered to a moral code compatible with family life and commerce, yet containing ideals that discouraged, among other things, reproduction (though not sex itself) and animal husbandry (specifically butchery, though not the raising and care of animals for other products).

Manichaean ritual

In the Manichaean tradition, Mani appears as a reformer of ritual practice. Prior messengers of God established the same cultic tradition, Manichaeans believed, but their earlier institutions became corrupted and misappropriated in the course of time. Mani's break with the Elchasaites, reported in the *Cologne Mani Codex*, is in itself a cultic reform (Buckley 1983). In this instance, ritual purity is at issue, and Mani denies the effectiveness of external baptisms of the body, replacing them with an internal realignment of the body's functioning. Manichaean ideology developed the role of the spirit in transforming the recipient of God's call, but abandoned the ritual of baptism entirely.

In the same way that Mani detected an underlying unity in the corrupted teachings of all religions, so he discovered a hidden 'ritual idiom' shared among the distorted practices of all ritual traditions: a food ritual buried beneath layers of distortion and misapplication, which the Manichaeans felt competent to restore to its pristine effectiveness. Mani saw ritual sacrifice as a misdirected and ineffective effort to return the essence of living things to their heavenly source:

> All of the alms that are given in the world because of the name of God, by every creed to the universe in his name, which their catechumens give because of the name of God—every place to which they bring these alms they lead them to affliction and hardship and wickedness. There is no rest or open gate through which they emerge and find occasion to ascend to God, because of whose name they are given, except only in the holy church.
>
> *(*Kephalaion 87*, 217.2–8)*

Mani was familiar with the establishment of a food ritual with sacrificial symbolism in the life of Jesus and its affirmation by the apostle Paul, and he explicitly identified the ritual he was instituting with this antecedent (*Cologne Mani Codex* 91.20ff.). By accepting the eucharistic transformation of sacrificial symbolism, and understanding it as a redirection of offerings from being burned on an altar to being consumed by holy men and women, Mani believed he had recovered the true and effective form of sacrificial ritual:

> The time, then, when these alms will reach the holy church, they are saved in it, and become pure and rest in it. They emerge from it and go to the God of truth, because of whose name they are given. The holy church itself, moreover, is the place of rest for all these alms that rest in it. It itself becomes a door to them and a ferrying place to that country of rest.
>
> *(*Kephalaion 87*, 217.12–20)*

This meal ritual, typically called 'The Table' (*trapeza*) in Greek and Coptic sources (*CMC* 35.1ff.; *Psalm-Book* 221–222; *Homilies* 16.18–21, 28.7–12), became the centerpiece of Manichaean daily ritual life, and the axis through which the community's celibate Elect interacted with its lay members, the Auditors (BeDuhn 2000).

Mani instituted other rituals for his church. He composed prayers and hymns that belong to the rich tradition of Semitic poetry shared with Jewish and Syriac Christian communities (Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano 2010). Manichaeans followed a set schedule of daily prayers possibly derived from Jewish practice. They emulated their founder by producing an extensive hymnic repertoire, examples of which are preserved in Coptic, Iranian, Turkic, and Chinese collections. Mani also introduced rites of confession and absolution, in both private and collective forms (BeDuhn 2004). He likewise believed himself to have been endowed with the gift of 'laying-on of hands' (*cheirothesia*), and passed it on to his followers as a means of healing, a conveyer of absolution, and an act of ordination (*CMC* 70.3).

Manichaean eschatology

Manichaeans did not believe in a physical resurrection of the dead at the end of the world. Instead, they expected an immediate post-mortem judgment, as did Zoroastrians. With words of encouragement as well as active protection, Jesus is portrayed guiding the soul out of its post-mortem anxiety and towards the light (Boyce 1954). Only the Elect could achieve full salvation at this critical moment; laypeople faced a kind of reincarnation—called 'decantation' or 'transfusion' (*metaggismos*)—that would continue to filter and refine their divine light from the pollution of darkness with which it was mixed. Nevertheless, ideas of a final judgment at the end of the world are prominent in early Manichaean literature, such as Mani's own *Šābuhragān*, and in the Coptic Manichaean *Homilies*, both of which draw on the Last Judgment scene of Matthew 25. Jesus, as 'Lord of the Realm of Wisdom,' the 'Great Shining One,' or 'Judge of Truth,' (*Homilies* 35.12ff.), 'will descend and set up his *Bema* (judgment seat) in the midst of the great inhabited world' (*Homilies* 36.30–31); from there he proceeds to judge the 'sheep' and 'goats' according to their deeds. 'For I was hungry and thirsty, [and] not one of [you] helped [me]' (*Homilies* 38.22–23). The judgment seat was a central symbol of the Manichaean community, with its eye always upon the eschaton. At its annual Bema ceremony, while looking back to Mani's death and imagining him to momentarily occupy the judgment seat in order to receive the confession and repentance of the community of believers, that same community looked forward to the return of Jesus: 'Thou art glorious, blessed Bema, that shall reign unto the end of the world, until Jesus shall come and sit upon it and judge all races' (*Psalm-Book* 25.24–26). Following a millennial restoration of true religion in its Manichaean form, the cosmos will be dissolved in a cataclysmic fire, which will refine out of

mixture the final portions of trapped divine light, liberating it for ascent to its original home in the Realm of Light. Evil will be reduced to an inert lump (*bolos*), from which it never again will be able to mount an assault on the Good.

Conclusion

Born of one man's visionary experiences and creative intellect, Manichaeism continued to develop after his death as a rich, vibrant religious tradition, constantly creating new forms of expression and engagement with the many other religions with which it came into contact. It enjoyed a brilliant history of literary, artistic, and musical production while providing a spiritual culture of persistent attraction to converts for over a millennium. Although in some regional forms Mani eclipsed Jesus as the primary savior figure and object of devotion, no Manichaean community forgot the place Jesus held in the tradition as a divine revealer and guide to salvation. Perhaps no other offshoot of the Christian movement divaricated further from the main stock of the Christian tradition, and in this respect Manichaeism can be understood to have become a distinct religion in its own right. Yet we must consider its place as the earliest expression of Christianity in Asian cultures largely untouched by the Hellenism that established the assumptions and expectations through which Christianity was interpreted and adapted in the Roman world. Having never acknowledged that western variety as the norm, Manichaeans could with clear conscience claim to represent an equally authentic understanding of the Christian kerygma. Most remarkable of all, they could see the doctrines and practices of their church as 'true Christianity,' and at the same time 'true Zoroastrianism' and 'true Buddhism.' The breadth of spiritual vision expressed in this Manichaean self-image is unique in the annals of Christian history.

Notes

1 See also Rose 1979: 67–69; Gardner 1988: 67; Franzmann 2003: 133ff.; BeDuhn 2009: 51–70.

2 From the Latin west, Faustus in *Faust*. 20.2; from Iranian Manichaeism, in the account of Mani's disciple Gabriab standing before the rising Jesus, i.e., the moon, in the evening to pray in TM 389a.R.23ff. (Sundermann 1981: 47); in Turkic Central Asia, his identification as Kun Ai Tengri, the god of sun and moon.

3 Wurst 2000: 649, draws attention to this correct rendering of the Latin *patibilis* as 'vulnerable' ('leidensfähiger'), not 'suffering' ('leidender') as it is often given in secondary literature.

4 Wurst 2000: 653, considers Faustus' coinage as 'eine *ad hoc*-Bildung' that can 'schwerlich als integraler Bestandteil manichäischer Christologie gewertet werden'; cf. Franzmann 2003: 142. Gardner 1991: 77, however, maintains that the identification of Jesus and the imprisoned living soul can be regarded neither as 'a later accretion nor a regional variant.' Faustus simply applied a new term to an essential part of the Manichaean conception of Christ.

5 It is clear that this is the meaning Fortunatus takes from the Latin *hoc sentite in vobis, quod et in Christo Iesu*.

6 Numerous versions of his appearance to them survive. In some of them, Jesus warns Adam away from Eve, since sexuality will perpetuate the imprisonment of light through reproduction of 'mixed' human beings. In others, he apparently works through Eve to enlighten Adam (*Kephalaion 16*, 54.2–9; 38.94.3–4).

7 The most direct rejection of 'two-nature' language is found in isolated passages quoted from supposed letters of Mani, long thought to be later Christian polemical forgeries; but close examination of their ideas and expression gives reason to regard them as genuinely Manichaean, even if not genuinely from the pen of Mani. See Gardner and Lieu 2004: 174–175.

8 For example, Allberry 1938 identified 123 New Testament allusions in the half of the Coptic *Psalm-Book* he edited. Several times that number are found in the Latin Manichaean literature preserved in Augustine of Hippo. See Böhlig 2013, which, however, reflects the state of knowledge at the time of the 1947 dissertation on which it is based.

9 *Acts of Archelaus* 15; Augustine, *c. Fel*. 1.9; *c. Faust*. 15.6; cf. the citation of John 16:13 on the same subject in *c. Fel*. 1.2 and, along with John 14:26 to the same effect, in *c. Faust*. 32.

10 *Cologne Mani Codex* 48–61 quotes apocalyptic texts attributed to each of these figures with the exception of Noah, but the latter appears in Manichaean lists of prior prophets (e.g., *Psalm-Book* 142.4–9). The Manichaean Faustus of Milevis mentions Seth and Enoch (Augustine, *c. Faust*. 19.3) and more generally the pre-Mosaic patriarchs (22.2).

11 'One of the princes of darkness' (Augustine, *c. Faust*. 15.8; *Gen. c. man*. 2.26.39; *Ep*. 236.2), the 'demon of the Jews' (*c. Faust*. 18.2; cf. Ephrem [Mitchell 1912: xci]), or Satan (*Kephalaion 2*, 21.15–23; 65, 159.108; *Acta Archelai* 15.8–11).
12 Especially the conduct of the deity portrayed there, as well as of the biblical heroes, e.g., Augustine, *c. Faust*. 12.1.
13 Cf. the same terminology employed by Fortunatus in Augustine, *c. Fort*. 3.
14 On the two tree theme generally, see Coyle 2009: 65–88.
15 E.g., John 3:19 in *Kephalaion 76*, 184.11–12 and 185.12–13; *Psalm-Book* 165.29-30; *Letter to Menoch* 177; *Acts of Archelaus* 15.

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PART X

Profiles

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47
ORIGEN

Thomas P. Scheck

Survey of Origen's life

Many consider Origen of Alexandria (185–254) to be the most important and influential Christian theologian of the ancient church. The indispensable source of information about his life and works is Eusebius (d. 340), *Historia Ecclesiastica* (*HE*), book 6. Eusebius, the bishop of Caesarea, originally wrote in Greek, but his book was well known in the west as well thanks to Rufinus of Aquileia's (345–411) Latin translation of it. Thus Origen has always been well known to educated Christians of the east and west. Origen was born the eldest of seven children to Christian parents, apparently in Alexandria, Egypt. He received a thorough education in scripture and Greek literature from his father Leonides who in 202 suffered martyrdom by beheading after being imprisoned during a persecution that took place under the Emperor Septimus Severus (193–211). Thus he was the son of a saint and a martyr. Eusebius reports that the teenage Origen was zealous for martyrdom himself, even sending a letter to his imprisoned father exhorting him not to shrink back for the sake of his family from offering the supreme witness of the faith. Origen later preached: 'If God would consent to let me be washed in my blood, receiving a second baptism by accepting death for Christ, I would surely go from this world . . . But blessed are they who merit these things' (*Homily 7.2 on Judges*). A treatise by Origen on this subject survives, the *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, in which he exhorts persecuted Christians to remain steadfast in order to obtain their eternal reward and be united with God. Only those can be saved who confess their faith. Origen's enthusiasm for martyrdom is reminiscent of the outpourings of Ignatius of Antioch, with whose writings he was familiar.

After Leonides's death, the family's goods were confiscated. In order to support his mother and siblings, Origen became a teacher of Greek grammar and literature. He studied philosophy as well as other liberal subjects, eventually including the Hebrew language, and he gained a reputation for his learning, even in the pagan world. Demetrius the bishop of Alexandria then put him in charge of instructing catechumens, and for some time Origen maintained dual teaching responsibilities (both secular and ecclesial). He later gave up teaching secular literature, sold his library for a meager sum of money, and dedicated himself to Christian catechesis. In Alexandria this activity went on during the persecutions, and many of Origen's pupils and converts were persecuted and even killed, while he accompanied them to the execution site. Apparently, the imperial anti-Christian legislation only applied to converts, not to those who were already baptized. (See *Historia Augusta*, *Severus* 17.1). Later in Caesarea Origen's giftedness as a Christian teacher was remembered with nostalgia and great emotion by one of his most famous pupils, St. Gregory Thaumaturgus (the Wonderworker), in the

Figure 47.1 Lithograph of Origen, after a relief by Michael Burghers. From Cave (1687: 213)

Panegyric to Origen. Gregory highlighted the fact that Origen's mastery over the mysteries of divine scripture gave him perfect boldness to deal with all subjects. Origen's surviving letter to the historical critical scholar Julius Africanus impresses the reader with this same deep feeling of humble but intellectually well-grounded piety. At the beginning of the fourth century, the future martyr, Pamphilus of Caesarea (d. 310), assessed Origen's character similarly (cf. *Apology for Origen* 3).

Origen lived an ascetic lifestyle in conscious imitation of Jesus and the apostles. He remained celibate. It is said that he slept on the hard ground, wore no shoes, had but a single tunic, ate meals very frugally and never without the oral reading of scripture, and maintained an income below the subsistence level. According to some reports, he took Matt. 19:12 literally and castrated himself in order to protect his chastity, since many of his students were female. The latter story is often doubted by modern scholars as second-hand hearsay, since it seems to contradict several passages in Origen's writings where he rejects such a crassly literal interpretation of Jesus's words. Yet the tradition about Origen's self-castration still seems likely, since it is recorded by Eusebius, who was a fervent admirer of Origen.

At some point, Origen is reported to have traveled to Rome to visit the famous church there. Jerome preserves the tradition that in Rome Origen heard Hippolytus preach a sermon, and the

future martyr (Hippolytus) acknowledged the presence of his distinguished guest (cf. Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 61). Origen later moved to Palestine, where, Eusebius reports, bishop Theoctistus of Caesarea allowed him to preach, even though Origen was still a layman. This illustrates the relative freedom of the early church. A layman is recognized as a leading teacher. Later, Origen was ordained a priest in Palestine by the local bishops, a canonically irregular procedure in that it took place without permission from Demetrius (Origen's bishop in Alexandria) and it was carried out in spite of the mutilation he had deliberately undergone. According to Eusebius it was for these reasons, i.e., canonical irregularities, that Origen was expelled from the church of Alexandria. However, doctrinal issues seem to have been involved as well in Origen's excommunication which Eusebius may have suppressed out of his partiality for Origen. Yet they are attested by Origen himself in his own *Letter to Friends in Alexandria*, a fragment of which is cited by both Rufinus and Jerome, who were on opposite sides of the Origenist controversy in the late fourth century (cf. Jerome, *Apology against Rufinus*, 2.18). The doctrinal issue referred to in that letter was Origen's alleged belief that the devil would ultimately be saved, something Origen interestingly in the same letter repudiates as a misrepresentation of his teaching.

Origen was consulted in theological discussions, one of which survives, *The Dialogue with Heraclides* (although this work, as a recent discovery, does not appear in Migne). In this work he describes the Father and the Son as 'two gods, one power,' which some scholars take to be equivalent in meaning to the later formula: 'two persons, one nature.' Origen is said to have journeyed to Arabia and to Antioch, where he had been summoned by Julia Mammaea, the mother of the emperor Alexander Severus, who wanted to learn more about Christianity from him. In 250, shortly after completing his two longest works, his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* and the *Contra Celsum*, Origen was arrested during Decius's persecution. He was imprisoned and severely tortured. Based on Origen's own epistolary testimony (which no longer survives), Eusebius reports that in prison he underwent terrible sufferings and dreadful cruelties on the rack, chains, bodily torments, agony in iron, and the darkness of his cell. He responded with courage and determination. By refusing to execute him, the judge aimed without success to force Origen to commit apostasy. Finally, the emperor died and the anti-Christian measures expired. Origen was released, but in broken health. He died a few years later at the age of 69, probably in 254. Origen was thus initially ranked among the church's 'confessors' (a person who confesses and adheres to the Christian religion in spite of persecution).

One can readily understand why Origen would have been so admired by many Christians of subsequent generations. His life had been characterized by heroic Christian virtue and discipleship. His death was the nearest approach to martyrdom that one can make, and he died in the bosom of the church, as a priest who had been ordained by the holiest and most illustrious bishops in Palestine, Theoctistus of Caesarea (d. 259) and Alexander of Jerusalem (d. 250). He was a respected scripture scholar, catechist, and apologist, granting that some of his theological speculations had been deemed controversial even during his lifetime. He was revered by other bishops, such as Gregory Thaumaturgus (d. 270) and Firmilian of Caesarea in Cappadocia (d. 268). His substantial orthodoxy was defended a few decades after his death by the martyr Pamphilus (d. 310), as well as by bishops and theologians of later generations. Yet the very fact that a defense was called for indicates that some of Origen's teachings had evoked opposition.

Survey of Origen's surviving works

One of the great tragedies of church history is that the vast majority of Origen's writings did not survive. This owes to the condemnation of 'Origenism' at the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553. Yet a large body of his writings does survive in both Greek and Latin. In light of the extensive influence of Origen's works upon subsequent Christian theologians, some have compared the destruction of Origen's writings to the shattering of a perfume vessel into a thousand pieces that filled the whole house (of the church) with its fragrance. Some of the missing titles are known from Jerome's

Ep 33 to Paula. Of Origen's major extant works, the following list indicates their title, Latin translator in square brackets (for works that do not survive in Greek), and in parentheses their approximate length in Migne columns (PG 11–17): *Against Celsus* (493 cols.), *Commentary on Romans* [Rufinus] (455), *Commentary on John* (405), *Commentary on Matthew* (382), *On First Principles* I–IV [Rufinus] (296), *Homilies on Numbers* [Rufinus] (220), *Commentary Series on Matthew* (199), *Homilies on Leviticus* [Rufinus] (169), *Commentary on the Song of Songs* [Rufinus] (136), *Homilies on Joshua* [Rufinus] (123), *Homilies on Genesis* [Rufinus] (117), *Homilies on Jeremiah* [Jerome] (107), *Homilies on Exodus* [Rufinus] (100), *Homilies on Luke* [Jerome] (99), *Homilies on Ezekiel* [Jerome] (96), *Homilies on Psalms 36–38* [Rufinus] (90), *On Prayer* (73), *Pamphilus's Apology for Origen* [Rufinus] (72), *Homilies on Judges* [Rufinus] (40), *On Martyrdom* (36), *Homilies on Isaiah* [Jerome] (35), *Homilies on the Song of Songs* [Jerome] (21), *Homily on 1 Samuel* [Rufinus?] (17). According to these estimates, Rufinus of Aquileia (345–411) was responsible for translating approximately 50 percent of the surviving works of Origen. Jerome (347–420) translated nearly 10 percent of the corpus that survives.

The *Hexapla*

Origen's massive text-critical project, the *Hexapla* (= sixfold [Bible]) displayed in parallel columns the Hebrew Old Testament with a Greek transliteration, the Greek translations of Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, the LXX, and sometimes two or three other Greek versions where they were available. The Hebrew version in the first column was roughly equivalent to the Masoretic text (the medieval Hebrew text on which modern translations of the Old Testament are based). But unbeknownst to Origen, who lived before the science of textual criticism had been discovered, the Hebrew text he used was not the same one used by the third-century BC Septuagint translators, whose version was hundreds of years older than the other Greek translators. Symmachus, Theodotion, and Aquila had used a Hebrew text that approximates the Hexaplaric Hebrew text. Although Origen's work was never copied and subsequently perished, hundreds of its readings are preserved in Jerome's commentaries on the Old Testament. Thus Origen's incredible scholarly labour on scripture was not completely wasted. See the diagram of the *Hexapla* (Figure 47.2).

The LXX was displayed in the fifth column of the *Hexapla*. Using critical signs adapted from the great Homeric critic Aristarchus, Origen marked with an asterisk (*) words or lines lacking in the Septuagint but present in the Hebrew (as attested by the other Greek versions). He marked with an obelus (†) words or lines which were lacking in the Hebrew. Origen was not thereby endeavoring to promote for public use a new version of scripture based on this reconstructed text, since he was always wary of displacing the old Bible (the LXX) with a new version. Rather, he desired merely to show Christians what readings obtained among contemporary Jews. Eusebius of Caesarea reproduced and published the Hexaplaric recension of the LXX, aided by Pamphilus, around 307 AD, at first with the critical signs included, but eventually they were deleted. This led to the circulation of a version which was not the original text of the LXX. In reality it consisted of a mixture of the LXX with Aquila and Theodotion. Modern textual critics recognize that this latter development was harmful to the science of text-criticism of the Septuagint.

In the fifth century Jerome translated the Hexaplaric recension of the LXX, and used that as the basis of his new translation of the Hebrew. He defended the 'Hebrew truth' over against the Septuagint version. However, he did not realize that the LXX translators had used a far older Hebrew text than that displayed in Origen's *Hexapla*. Jerome mistakenly presumed that that Septuagint's *Vorlage* is visible in the first column of Origen's *Hexapla*, and that divergences between that particular Hebrew text and the LXX translation must be explained by faulting either the LXX or its transmission. He thus vastly underestimated the value of the Greek Septuagint as a witness to the original Hebrew text. Jerome's Christian critics, such as Augustine and Rufinus (who were equally ignorant of the principles of textual transmission), defended the authority of the LXX in its Old Latin version over against the new Hebrew version being promoted by Jerome. In doing so, and unbeknownst

Ps. xlv. (xlvi.) 1—3[1].

Hebrew.	Hebs. transliterated.	Aquila.
ולמנצח	λαμανασση	τῷ νικοποιῷ·
לבני קרח	[λ]αβηκωρ	τῶν υἱῶν Κόρε
על עלמות	αλ · αλμωθ	ἐπὶ νεανιοτήτων
שיר	σιρ	ἆσμα.
אלהים לנו	ελωειμ · λανου*	[ὁ θεὸς ἡμῖν (?)]
מחסה ועז	μασε · ουοζ	ἐλπὶς καὶ κράτος,
עזרה	εζρ	βοήθεια
בצרות	βσαρωθ	ἐν θλίψεσιν
נמצא מאד	νεμσα μωδ	εὑρέθη* σφόδρα.
על כן	αλ · χεν·	ἐπὶ τούτῳ
לא נירא	λω · νηρα	οὐ φοβηθησόμεθα
בהמיר	βααμιρ	ἐν τῷ* ἀνταλλάσσεσθαι
ארץ	ααρε	γῆν,
ובמוט	ουβσμωτ	καὶ ἐν τῷ σφάλλεσθαι
הרים	αριμ	ὄρη
בלב	βλεβ	ἐν καρδίᾳ
ימים	ιαμιμ	θαλασσῶν.

* In the MS. λανου appears in the third column, where it has displaced Aquila's rendering.

* MS. εὑρέθης.

[1] Cf. *Un palimpsesto Ambrosiano dei Salmi Esapli* (Giov. Mercati) in *Atti d. R. Accademia d. Scienze di Torino*, 10 Apr. 1896; and E. Klostermann, *die Marginder Fragmente der Hexapla*. The MS. does not supply the Hebrew column.

Ps. xlv. (xlvi.) 1—3.

Symmachus.	LXX.	Theodotion[1].
ἐπινίκιον·	εἰς τὸ τέλος·	τῷ νικοποιῷ*·
τῶν υἱῶν Κόρε	ὑπὲρ τῶν υἱῶν* Κόρε	τοῖς υἱοῖς Κόρε
ὑπὲρ τῶν αἰωνίων	ὑπὲρ τῶν κρυφίων	ὑπὲρ τῶν κρυφίων
ᾠδή.	ψαλμός.	ᾠδή*.
ὁ θεὸς ἡμῖν	ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν†	ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν
πεποίθησις καὶ ἰσχύς,	καταφυγὴ καὶ δύναμις,	καταφυγὴ καὶ δύναμις,
βοήθεια	βοηθὸς	βοηθὸς
ἐν θλίψεσιν	ἐν θλίψεσι	ἐν θλίψεσιν
εὑρισκόμενος σφόδρα.	ταῖς εὑρούσαις ἡμᾶς‡ σφόδρα.	εὑρέθη† σφόδρα.
διὰ τοῦτο	διὰ τοῦτο	διὰ τοῦτο
οὐ φοβηθησόμεθα	οὐ φοβηθησόμεθα	οὐ φοβηθησόμεθα
ἐν τῷ* συγχεῖσθαι	ἐν τῷ ταράσσεσθαι	ἐν τῷ ταράσσεσθαι
γῆν	τὴν γῆν	τὴν γῆν
καὶ κλίνεσθαι	καὶ μετατίθεσθαι	καὶ σαλεύεσθαι‡
ὄρη	ὄρη	ὄρη
ἐν καρδίᾳ	ἐν καρδίᾳ	ἐν καρδίᾳ
θαλασσῶν.	θαλασσῶν.	θαλασσῶν.

* MS. ταῖς.

* With interlinear variant τοῖς υἱοῖς (Th.).
† MS. 1* ημαιν ἡμῖν (? Aq. Sym.).
‡ With interlinear variant εὑρεθῆναι ἡμῶν.

* With marginal variants, εἰς τὸ τέλος, ψαλμός (LXX.).
† With interlinear variant ταῖς εὑρούσαις ἡμᾶς (LXX.).
‡ With interlinear variant μετατίθεσθαι (LXX.).

[1] Or Quinta? Cf. H. Lietzmann in *G. G. A.* 1902, v., p. 332: "die letzte Columne ist nicht, wie man anfangs glaubte, Theodotion, sondern die Quinta mit Interlinearvarianten."

Figure 47.2 Sample of a page in the *Hexapla*. From Swete 1914: 62–63

to themselves, they were essentially defending very ancient Hebrew readings. Jerome's text-critical theory inherited the defective state of knowledge of his predecessors. His privileging of the Hebrew text used by contemporary Jews as the ultimate source of biblical truth was by no means a simple recognition of scientific fact, since he wrongly supposed that the Hexaplaric Hebrew text was the original. Thus did Origen's great Bible project lead to some unintended consequences.

Origen's speculations and dogmatic errors

Origen's first book, *On First Principles*, became his most controversial treatise and was the main source of posthumous accusations against his orthodoxy. In this work Origen became the first Christian theologian to attempt a theological reflection on the essential doctrines of the Christian faith, beginning with the Holy Trinity, using the tools of reason, scripture, and apostolic tradition. His stated aim was to defend the church's faith against the heretics. In this work he speculates about an *apokatastasis* or universal restoration of all rational creatures. Origen's philosophical conjectures (which stand in tension with his exegesis) sometimes appear to resemble the Platonist theory of metempsychosis. He seems to speculate that since created spirits never lose their freedom, they may go on falling and rising and falling again for ever (*On First Principles* 3.1). Philosophically, he adheres to the idea that only the good can be eternal and that evil must eventually disappear altogether. If that is the case, universal salvation would become a matter of necessity, not negated by the long duration of the process that may be required. Yet since Origen admitted that a creature with freewill could always refuse to surrender to God, he drew the inference that it was possible for such creatures to go on falling and rising. His views are contrary to the doctrine that the choice made in this life, or the angels' choice at the beginning of the world, is decisive in character. Yet to my knowledge this element in Christian dogma was only developed and clarified after Origen's lifetime.

The weak point in Origen's philosophical theory is his idea that the soul will return to the purely spiritual state it was in before it came down into the body. In response to heretical accusations against the injustice of God's governance of humanity, Origen posited that human souls are pre-existent spirits who fell away from God in the preceding world and are therefore now enclosed in material bodies in accordance with their previously earned merits or demerits. The sins committed by the soul in the preceding world explain the different situations into which they are born, whether among the brutal Scythians or among the cultivated and civilized Romans. Thus there can be no injustice on God's part in assigning these souls to their lots in life. Origen's theory about pre-existence was condemned by the Fifth General Council. In 553 fifteen anathemas were laid down against Origenist doctrines (but apparently outside the official sessions of the Council). Some modern scholars claim that the action of Emperor Justinian was really directed against sixth-century 'Origenists,' and not against the historical Origen. This would mitigate the authority and relevance of the action with respect to Origen. The condemned doctrines included Origen's theories about the pre-existence of human souls and of Christ's soul, the spherical shape of resurrection bodies, the animate nature of the stars and heavenly bodies, the suggestion that Christ may have to be crucified in the future age on behalf of demons, the view that the power of God is limited, and the conjecture that the punishment of demons and impious men is only temporary (DS 403–411). The doctrine of *apokatastasis* was condemned in these words:

> If anyone says or holds that the punishment of the demons and of impious men is temporary, and that it will have an end at some time, that is to say, there will be a complete restoration (*apokatastasis*) of the demons or of impious men, let him be anathema.
>
> *(DS 411)*

It is questionable whether Origen dogmatically *asserted* any of these heterodox views, but he tentatively put them forward for the sake of discussion as interpretive possibilities in his attempt to refute the arguments of his Gnostic opponents. In any case, the result of the conciliar action was that Origen was declared a heretic in the Greek church and his writings were destroyed. Many modern scholars—in particular an impressive group of Catholic theologians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, several of whom became cardinals—feel sympathy for Origen and would like to see him rehabilitated, in light of the Catholic spirit exhibited in statements like this:

> Although they (the heretics) seek to expound it, they will be unable to succeed. But I hope to be a man of the Church. I hope to be addressed not by the name of some heresiarch, but by the name of Christ. I hope to have his name, which is blessed upon the earth. I desire, both in deed and in thought, both to be and to be called a Christian.
>
> *(Homily 16.6 on Luke)*

Origen's defenders say that he was a pioneer with very little theological tradition to build upon. With scarcely any magisterial guidance to help him construct his views, he nevertheless manifested a docile and tentative spirit, in statements like this:

> I bear the title of priest and, as you see, I preach the word of God. But if I do anything contrary to the discipline of the Church or the rule laid down in the Gospels—if I give offence to you and to the Church—then I hope the whole Church will unite with one consent and cast me off.
>
> (Homily 7.6 on Joshua)

It is argued that Origen's strong desire to constantly observe the rule of faith, to follow the tradition, and be an obedient child of the church, is not the mark of an arch-heretic. For this reason,

Origen's name cannot justly be put alongside those who had made a conscious break with the church. Intention counts for something. In his *Apologia*, J. H. Newman said that he would not listen to the notion that so great a soul as Origen's was lost, even though from a doctrinal perspective Origen's ecclesiastical critics were mainly in the right. Newman adds: 'Yet who can speak with patience of his enemy and the enemy of St. John Chrysostom, that Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria [d. 412]? Who can admire or revere Pope Vigilius [d. 555]?'

The acceptance of the historical critical method in the Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council has clearly brought great benefits. Modern scholars now recognize that Origen's position on universalism resists neat schematization. He seems to have affirmed the logical possibility of restoration of all rational creatures, but also of the possibility of failure of such a hope, and he did not assert its inevitability. It seems somewhat ironic that Origen would eventually be faulted for teaching universalism. For Origen, not Cyprian, is the oldest source of the theological axiom, 'Outside the church there is no salvation.' In his third homily on Joshua, Origen discusses Rahab, the harlot from Jericho who hid two of Joshua's spies at the time of the conquest of Canaan and who recognized the Lord's power and demanded from the spies the promise that she and her family would be spared when the Israelites conquered (cf. Jos. 1:10–2:24). Joshua (Greek: *Jesus*) was faithful to the pledge, and only Rabab and her family were spared after the city's capture (Jos. 6:22–23). Origen interprets the scarlet thread let down from Rahab's window as a pre-figuration of redemption by the blood of Christ; her house represents the church. Origen then gives the following striking warning concerning the believer's obligation not to depart from the Catholic Church: 'Let no one deceive himself. Outside this house, that is, outside the Church, no one is saved (*Extra ecclesiam, nemo salvatur*). If anyone goes outside, he is responsible for his own death.' Origen's philosophical speculations apparently did not negate his fundamental ecclesiological principle that salvation is solely by the blood of Christ and is accessible only through the instrumentality of the Catholic Church.

Origen's homilies

Of Origen's surviving writings, 33 percent are homilies on scripture, which illustrates how deeply he was connected to the church of his day, as a priest, catechist, and pastor of souls. Origen's homilies represent the oldest surviving corpus of Christian sermons. As such they were in their Latin translations a source of inspiration to Christians of later generations in the west. Origen's reflections on the institutional church in his homilies are very valuable as a sort of window into the rites and customs of the church of the third century. It is chiefly in these homilies that he practices his 'allegorical' method of interpretation. His *Homilies on Numbers* and *Joshua* emphasize that the struggles of the Israelites on the way to and in Canaan are the image of the struggles of the Christian on the way to the Promised Land. What matters to Origen is not to speculate on the profound meaning of the Bible, but to receive it with a living faith and to adapt one's conduct to it. Origen endeavors to equip his hearers for spiritual warfare against Satan's demons and the vices they incite. Under the symbols of the Old Testament, he preaches spiritual combat. From the day when the divine Word is introduced into a soul at baptism, the Christian must be engaged in the struggle of virtues against vices. Before the Word came to attack them, the vices remained in peace, but as soon as it undertook to judge them one by one, then a great movement arose and a merciless war was commenced. This became an influential theme in Christian morality and asceticism. A striking witness to the influence of Origen's spirituality is Erasmus of Rotterdam's *Enchiridion* of 1503.

Excursus: the fidelity of the Latin translations of Origen

Jerome criticized Rufinus's translation technique, particularly for the work *On First Principles*, in *Ep* 124 and in his *Apology against Rufinus*, works that were written at the height of the Origenist controversy in the final decade of the fourth century. By his own admission, Rufinus suspected that

the Greek manuscripts of Origen's writings had been tampered with by heretics, an idea that Jerome reasonably doubted. Because of this suspicion, in his Latin translations Rufinus sometimes omitted or altered the wording of the original in order to make the text conform more adequately to Origen's plainly orthodox statements found elsewhere in his writings. For obvious reasons, Rufinus was concerned to defend Origen against the charge of 'proto-Arianism.' In response to Jerome, Rufinus does two things. First, he calls attention to the fact that Jerome is being hypocritical in accusing him, since Jerome had made use of the same techniques in translating Origen. In his *Apology against Jerome* 2.27, Rufinus has no difficulty showing that Jerome had glossed, paraphrased, and updated Origen when he translated Origen's *Homilies on Isaiah* into Latin. Evidently Jerome did this in order to protect Origen and prevent misrepresentation of his exegesis in the post-Nicene period. Rufinus shows not only that Jerome added clarifying glosses to Origen's original text, but he also omitted material that might have occasioned suspicion. Rufinus approves of Jerome's approach to translating Origen and says he took Jerome for his model in terms of translation technique. Until quite recently scholars have scarcely noticed the influence of Jerome's own translation technique upon Rufinus.

Second, Rufinus denies that he had added anything substantive of his own to his Latin translations of Origen. He says that he simply restored Origen to himself. On this point there are significant problems to be noted, since Rufinus mistakenly believed the spurious *Dialogue of Adamantius on the Orthodox Faith* was an authentic work of Origen. He had translated this work into Latin with the intention of exhibiting Origen as a champion in the fight against heresy. This spurious work contains statements such as 'I believe that . . . God the Word is consubstantial and eternal,' and 'the blessed Trinity is consubstantial and inseparable.' Such formulations seem to point to the recent determination of the Council of Nicaea (325). Yet Rufinus sincerely thought these were Origen's own expressions. He therefore evidently felt free to borrow such language and put it into Origen's mouth in certain thematically related texts, whenever he was convinced that heretics had inserted their own corruptions into Origen's original text. The technique itself was not so very different from what Jerome had done in his translation of Origen's *Homilies on Isaiah*. Yet the result is that passages in which Rufinus's Latin Origen speaks with the language of Nicaea are probably not to be trusted as literal representations of what Origen had written. Some modern scholars plausibly suggest that the historical Origen may have avoided *homoousios*-language entirely because it would have been reminiscent of the perceived materialism of some Gnostic writers. *Ousia* language may have seemed to the historical Origen unsuitable for application to the divine existence.

On the other hand, I. Ramelli has recently complicated the whole discussion of these matters by claiming that Origen was indeed the inspiration for the Nicene formula: one essence, three persons. She says that this is also consistent with Origen's designation of the Son as consubstantial with the Father. According to Ramelli, Origen's Trinitarian heritage is to be found, not in Arianism, but in Athanasius, Marcellus of Ancyra, Eusebius, Didymus, and above all Gregory of Nyssa and the Cappadocians. Ramelli's challenge to the modern discussion may end up undermining older approaches to these questions. At the very least it seems safe to say that apart from the Trinitarian/consubstantiality passages that resonate with the language of Nicaea, Rufinus's and Jerome's Latin translations can be received as generally reliable. Modern experts now acknowledge that although Rufinus in his translations of Origen is speaking with his own voice to the readers of his time, nevertheless, it is to Origen's ideas that we are listening when we read these translations.

Against Celsus

Against Celsus (*Contra Celsum*), which survives intact in Greek, is Origen's *magnum opus*. As his longest extant writing and final work, it comprises the most important written defense of Christianity from antiquity. It is a work of Christian apologetics that retains its relevance, vitality, and interest even to modern readers. In it, the struggle between paganism and Christianity is visible. Intellectually, Origen towers over his opponent, though he wears his learning lightly and never descends into

mockery, abuse, or excessive polemic. Eusebius and many other later Christian readers were convinced that Origen had silenced Christianity's opponents for all centuries to come.

Origen's method of exegesis: Old Testament

Origen's principles for interpreting the Old Testament derive from Christ himself, and therefore are quite complex. Jesus announced the beginning of his public ministry as a fulfillment of Isaiah 61 (cf. Luke 4:16–21), and related his miracles allusively to the literal fulfillment of prophecies made by the prophet Isaiah (Matt. 11:5; Luke 7:22; cf. Is 35:4–6). Jesus understood his own betrayal, suffering, death, and resurrection as the will of God that fulfills Old Testament predictions (cf. Matt. 14:27–28; Luke 22:37; 24:27). Though predicted and prefigured in the Old Testament, yet Jesus also claimed to surpass its greatest figures including Moses, David, Solomon, and Jonah (cf. Matt. 12:41–42; 22:45). Jesus explained the meaning of his life and death using the rites of the Sinai covenant (cf. Luke 22:20). He viewed the bronze serpent fashioned and lifted up by Moses in the wilderness as an allegory of his own death on the cross and ascension into heaven (cf. John 3:13–15). In respect to moral teaching, Jesus proclaimed that he had not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it (cf. Matt. 5:16–17); yet he was also critical of some of Moses' laws related to ritual defilement and tolerance of divorce (cf. Matt. 15:18–20; 19:8–9), which led to conflicts with his Jewish contemporaries. Origen endeavors to sit at Jesus' feet as a devoted pupil and to learn from him how to read and interpret the Old Testament.

In addition to the patterns laid down by Jesus, Origen regards Paul and the author of Hebrews as good examples of the Christian exegete. Paul in fact is the creator of the term 'allegorical exegesis.' In Gal. 4:21–31 Paul takes the famous story of Sarah and Hagar and superimposes new Christian meaning on top of it: the Jews saw themselves as God's chosen people, the children of Abraham and Isaac. Paul argues that actually those Jews who are now insisting on the law, given on Mount Sinai, correspond to Ishmael, son of the slave woman. Christians, on the other hand, who trust in the miracle-producing promises of God, correspond to Isaac. Paul sees the Christians, whether they descend from Jewish or Gentile backgrounds, as the true spiritual family of Abraham, as the true Israel (Gal. 6:16). For Paul, the Old Testament story is an allegory that bolsters his argument against the Judaizers. Paul's interpretation does not obliterate the literal meaning of the historical narrative but presupposes it.

The Jews and Judaizing Christians in the New Testament sought to hold Christians to the observances of circumcision, Passover, unleavened bread, rules about food and drink, feasts, new moons, and the Sabbath, by means of a literal interpretation of the Old Testament. They saw no meaning more profound than the immediate one in the Old Testament ceremonial law. Allegorical interpretation inaugurated by Jesus and Paul, equipped Christian interpreters to handle Jewish objections like this. Origen's principal objection to Jewish literal exegesis of scripture focuses on two issues in particular: the obligation to continue to adhere to Jewish ceremonial law (Sabbaths, sacrifices, food laws, etc.) and the identity of Jesus as the Messiah. Origen's critique of Jewish exegesis is not abstract and categorically dismissive of Jewish interpretation, but particular and focused on these specific dogmatic issues. To Christian interpreters, the practice of allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament is what distinguishes Christianity from Judaism, the New Covenant from the Old Mosaic Covenant. The Old Testament was never read by the ancient church as a separate body of texts; rather it was read through the interpretations already found in the New Testament. Jesus, Paul, and others had provided norms to be followed in the interpretation of sacred Old Testament scripture.

Scholars are now beginning to concede that Origen was not aiming to 'Hellenize' the biblical stories in the manner of neo-Platonic allegorizing of Homer, since he frequently tells his hearers to go back to the Gospels and to Paul to find examples of 'spiritual interpretation.' Programmatic texts for Origen's hermeneutics are: Matt. 5:17; Heb. 10:1; 1 Cor. 10:11; Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16–17. Especially in light of Paul's claims about the Old Testament in these passages, Origen asks in his homilies: Why were the biblical narratives preserved by the Holy Spirit in the church?

What spiritual lessons and warnings do these stories offer the Christian? What foreshadowing, what admonition, what instruction, what encouragement, reproof, correction, or exhortation, do we find in these narratives? Origen maintains the history intact and defends it, but he seeks the spiritual truth of it in the light of Christ.

On the other hand, it seems clear that Origen had an almost excessive admiration for ancient Jewish methods of exegesis, especially those used by the renowned Philo of Alexandria. Admittedly, Philo made an enormous contribution to both Jewish and Christian theology by recognizing that the Bible depicts God anthropomorphically and anthropopathically. Philo clarified that God in his reality does not literally resemble the way he is depicted on the surface of the Old Testament. He is not an angry, repentant, physically embodied deity who is also ignorant of the future. Passages that describe him that way need to be interpreted in a way that is worthy of God. Origen completely embraced Philo's viewpoint on this important theological theme. Yet Origen seems to have been too much under Philo's influence when he proposed the idea that all passages of the Old Testament have a symbolic sense. Origen tries to find a practical and spiritually edifying use even for seemingly insignificant details in the text of the Old Testament.

This may have been partly an over-reaction to the way the followers of Marcion denied that the Old Testament narratives had any use whatsoever. But Origen clearly goes too far in his allegorical exegesis and offers far-fetched interpretations that sometimes needlessly overlook or even undermine the literal sense. Attacks on Origen's doctrine of history and allegory by orthodox churchmen began during his own lifetime. Origen's interpretation of the first three chapters of Genesis (again heavily influenced by Philo's recognition of the anthropomorphic depiction of the deity) leaves the reader with the impression that he utterly denies the historical factuality of the Garden of Eden, which is not quite true. His main concern in such texts is directed against an unbefitting interpretation of the narratives, as if God literally has a physical body, plants trees like a gardener, and walks around in the cool breeze like a man.

On the other hand, when Origen allegorizes narratives, it is noteworthy that he does not claim finality for his spiritual interpretations, and in fact he often offers more than one. Frequently, he challenges his hearers to pursue their own investigations into the mystical meaning. It is also evident that Origen's linguistic terminology is significantly different from that of moderns. His understanding of 'allegory' or 'spiritual understanding' is far more comprehensive than it is for modern scholars. It is virtually the equivalent of 'figurative.' When Origen encounters an anthropomorphism, a metaphor, a parable, a figurative expression, he says that it must be taken 'in the spiritual sense.' Origen's notion of 'literal' is diminutive in comparison with ours. Metaphorical meanings that modern exegetes would consider to be included in the literal sense, Origen identifies as allegorical or spiritual meanings. The benefit that came to the church from Origen's approach, whatever the excesses, was to assure the Old Testament a permanent place in the Christian liturgy. Origen did this not by an abstract theory but by working his way through the entire Old Testament, book by book, sentence by sentence, and word by word. Origen provided the church with the first Christian commentary on virtually the entire Old Testament. Seldom, if ever again, would voices be raised in dispute over whether the Old Testament had its proper and rightful place in the Christian church.

Origen's exegesis of the Gospels

About 42 percent of Origen's surviving works are commentaries on scripture. Origen's commentaries on Song of Songs and Romans became classics in the west, though there always remained theologians (such as Thomas Aquinas) who remained ignorant of them. Those on Matthew and John, which survived only in fragmentary form, seem to have been less well known, although Origen's exegesis of Matthew had been thoroughly assimilated into St. Jerome's *Commentary on Matthew*. Origen's *Commentary on John* was first edited by Daniel Huet in 1688. All four of these commentaries (Song of Songs, Romans, John, Matthew) show Origen 'at work' in the verse-by-verse exposition of individual

books of the Bible. Of these great commentaries of Origen, all but the commentary on Romans place their main focus on bringing out the spiritual and allegorical meaning of the text. For even in his exegesis of the Gospels, Origen's interpretation focuses on the symbolism that he thinks is inherent in the narratives, not on the literal historical meaning. This is not to say that Origen denies the history of the Gospel narratives, but he seeks to transcend it when he expounds these texts in the church. Origen believed that Jesus wanted to make the actions reported to us by the evangelists symbolic of his own spiritual operations within us. He believed that everything in the Gospels, Christ's birth, his growth, his maturity, his passion, his descent to hell, his resurrection and ascension, not only took place at a given time, but also continues to act in us even today.

Origen's exegesis of Paul's writings

Since Origen's *Commentary on Romans* is his second longest extant work, it merits careful consideration. He adopts a more literal and historical approach in interpreting Paul's writings, since his 'allegorical' method of exegesis applies first and foremost to the interpretation of the Old Testament, secondarily to the Gospels, but it does not fundamentally apply to the letters of St. Paul. Scholars have observed that the basic divergence between an allegorical and a more literal approach to scripture is far less relevant to the interpretation of Paul's writings than it is to that of the Old Testament or of the Gospels. The epistles of Paul already are Christian theology, which is not the case for much of the Old Testament according to the letter. Paul's letter to the Romans, for example, offers a Christian theological interpretation of the Old Testament in its literal argument. Paul himself alludes to the Christian meaning of Abraham's faith and circumcision (chs. 2 and 4), of the propitiatory (ch. 3:25), of Adam (ch. 5), of the law (ch. 7), of God's choice of Jacob over Esau (ch. 9), of God's dealings with Pharaoh (ch. 9) and Elijah (ch. 11), of the offering of sacrifices (ch. 12), of the Hebrew prophecies concerning the identity of the Messiah and the inclusion of the Gentiles among God's people (ch. 15), etc. Elsewhere, Paul explains the allegorical significance of Abraham's wives Sarah and Hagar and their sons (cf. Galatians 4). Upon such Pauline material, Origen does not need to dig beneath the letter to find Christian meaning, since it is on the surface and of ready application.

Origen's *Commentary on Romans* is his only Scriptural commentary which is preserved in a coherent form from the beginning to the end of the Scriptural book on which he is writing an explanation. This feature distinguishes it from his commentaries on John and Matthew, which survive in fragmentary form on a very limited selection of texts from these Gospels. Originally written in Greek *c.* 244–246, it was known and used by numerous orthodox writers. When Origen's work was translated into Latin by Rufinus in 406, it was well received. Jerome (347–420) who knew the work in its Greek form sanctioned it by integrating its insights into his own Pauline exegesis. In its Latin form Origen's *Commentary on Romans* was used extensively by Pelagius; it may have been briefly consulted by St. Augustine; clearly Cassiodorus (490–583) commended Origen's work in his *Institutiones*, where he indicates the ecclesiastical authors who could provide the safest guidance for understanding the individual books of the Bible. In the medieval period Origen's work was utilized extensively, and in the sixteenth century, Erasmus of Rotterdam was heavily influenced by Origen's exegesis of Romans.

Origen's understanding of Romans

One of the central themes in Origen's *Commentary on Romans* is the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the divine dispensation. Origen describes Paul's conduct as that of an arbiter sitting between the Jews and the Gentiles. The apostle invites both groups to faith in Christ in such a way as to not offend the Jews completely by destroying the Jewish ceremonies, or to cause despair in the Gentiles by affirming the observance of the law and of the letter. As Paul recalls the promises or the threats of punishment, he apportions the word to each people, being careful not to alienate

members of either group. Thus he tempers and balances his discourse as a kind of mediator. Such an understanding of the basic message of Romans is strikingly modern and accordant with the 'New Perspective' of Pauline interpretation. It accords real value to Judaism while arguing for the superiority of the Christian revelation.

Origen's gives an all-important position to the salutary value of Christ's death on the cross with an abundance of detail lacking in any previous theologian. His theory of original sin may not be identical with Augustine's, but he clearly views all human beings as sinners who are unable to save themselves. For both Jews and Gentiles salvation comes only through God's mercy. Therefore all human boasting is excluded. Yet Origen does not view the gratuity of salvation as something that nullifies free human cooperation with divine grace. There is collaboration, even though the blood of Christ justifies us much more than our faith.

For Origen, the doctrine that Paul proclaims in his epistles must be harmonized with the teaching of Jesus of the Gospels. Some modern scholars influenced by Bultmann endeavor to minimize or even deny the influence of the Jesus tradition upon the apostle Paul. Origen thinks that Paul's meaning can be best expounded by shedding light upon it from the Gospel traditions. Commenting on the apostle's words in Rom. 5:2, Origen says that if anyone wants to have access through our Lord Jesus Christ to the grace of the Lord, he must be purged from all the vices. Otherwise Jesus as the door will not allow those who are doing things alien to him to enter through it. Origen explains Paul's meaning in Rom. 2:26–27 by referring to Ezek. 44:9: 'Therefore thus says the Lord God: No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the people of Israel, shall enter my sanctuary' (RSV). Origen says that those who show themselves to be uncircumcised either in faith (by holding base and unworthy opinions concerning the faith), or in works (by committing unclean and defiled actions), will be excluded from entering the sanctuary of God. Origen repeatedly affirms that faith and good works are both needed. One without the other is condemned, 'seeing that faith without works is called dead (Jas 2:17,26); and no one is justified before God by works without faith.' Origen cites Matt. 7:24 and Luke 6:46 to show that 'everywhere faith is joined with works and works are united with faith.' Faith and works cleave (*adhaerens*) to one another and are consummated. This is why Paul insists in Rom. 3.31 that Christians do not make void the law but establish it, just as Jesus had said in Matt. 5:17: 'I have not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it.'

Origen views faith as the beginning of being justified by God. It must go down deep into the soil of the soul, like a root that has received rain, so that when it begins to be cultivated through God's law, branches arise from it which bring forth the fruit of works. 'The root of justice, therefore, does not grow out of the works, but the fruit of works grows out of the root of justice, namely out of the root of justice, which God accepts even without works.' Thus faith obtains the justice out of which works emerge; and this relationship is not reversible. By faith alone does one receive forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God. Works are thus not the cause of grace, but its outworking, because grace must be effective in the human being. Origen treats hope and love as virtues that cleave inseparably to faith. God's promise of salvation will be fulfilled only if faith, hope, and love abide in those who believe: faith is the initial foundation of salvation; hope is the progress and increase of the building; love is the perfection and culmination of the entire work. That is why love is said to be greater than everything else (cf. 1 Cor. 13:13).

Origen distinguishes post-baptismal works of justice, or the Christian virtues, from the Pauline term 'works of the law,' which he takes to be equivalent to the works of the Pharisees reproached by Jesus in the Gospels. He says that the works which Paul repudiates and frequently criticizes are not the works of justice (*opera iustitiae*) which are commanded in the law, but those in which they boast who keep the law according to the flesh; that is, the circumcision of the flesh, the sacrificial rituals, the observance of Sabbaths and new moon festivals (cf. Col. 2:18). Works like these are the ones by which no one can be saved. But one should take care that the grace he has received should not be in him 'in vain' (cf. 1 Cor. 15:10). Anyone who sins after having attained grace becomes ungrateful to him who offered the grace. Origen so wishes to safeguard the necessity of the Christian's

post-baptismal good works that he sometimes delimits the 'works of the law' that Paul criticizes to Jewish ceremonial works apart from faith. It is not such ritual works that need to be added to faith for the grace of God not to be received in vain, but the moral works done in obedience to the law of Christ, for the doing of which Christians will most certainly be judged. Origen's interpretation here is another instance of an early precedent for the so-called 'new perspective' in Pauline interpretation. Many contemporary scholars now agree that Paul's words 'apart from works' normally mean: apart from those works of the law that visibly separate the Jewish people from the nations. They do not refer to the good works produced in obedience to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:2).

Interestingly, Origen exemplifies the necessity of the Christian's mortification to sin by citing the example of the thief on the cross who had been planted together in the likeness of Christ's death and of his resurrection, and for that reason he deserved paradise since he had been joined to the tree of life. By God's wonderful gift of life to him the thief had not only been declared just with respect to the past, with no antecedent works, but he had also become inherently just and worthy of paradise through his free and active adhesion to the living Christ. The meritorious character of his actions had its source in the grace of justification and completed the conception of it. He had been liberated from the death of sin; his soul was united to Christ who gave it new life. In interpreting Paul, Origen strives to achieve harmony with the words and actions of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels. Origen thinks that Paul, James, Jesus, the prophets, and the whole Bible are unified. They all tell one story about one subject.

Origen's legacy in the west

Origen's legacy in the west continues to be underestimated. Scholars often claim that Origen was seldom cited and little known in the medieval western tradition until Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1493) championed his work in the fifteenth century. De Lubac has provided the corrective to this widespread error. His studies have documented that the entire western tradition is witness to an extraordinary interest in the works of Origen, which were immensely popular. Origen was destined to be one of the foremost educators of the Latin Middle Ages. More than any other figure in the fields of hermeneutics, exegesis, and spirituality, Origen would be the grand master. De Lubac was speaking mainly of the *direct* influence of the Latin Origen upon writers in the Middle Ages. But there was also a very significant *indirect* influence. Hilary, Ambrose, and Jerome profoundly assimilated Origen's Greek Scriptural interpretations into their own Latin writings. No scholar familiar with their works would dare deny this. It is true that the Greekless Augustine was uninfluenced by Origen's exegesis in his own Scriptural commentaries, except for an accidental coincidence of thought here and there; but Augustine was also uninfluenced by Jerome's erudite Latin exegesis with which he was undoubtedly familiar. For example, in his own commentary on Galatians, Augustine completely ignored Jerome's linguistic and theological insights, even though Augustine clearly had full access to Jerome's commentary and had severely criticized some of Jerome's interpretations in his written correspondence.

Origen's influence on Jerome is comparable to the influence of Greek philosophers upon Cicero, Homer's influence on Virgil, or Menander's influence on Terence. It is impossible to conceive of these Latin authors apart from the influence of the Greek models. To begin with Jerome had inaugurated his scholarly career by translating Origen's *Homilies on Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*, *Isaiah*, *Luke*, and *Song of Songs*. His own *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* essentially reproduces Origen's interpretation of this book. In *On Famous Men* 75 Jerome reports that he possessed Origen's twenty-five-book *Commentary on the Twelve [Minor] Prophets*, transcribed by the hand of the martyr St. Pamphilus himself, 'which I hug and guard with such joy, that I deem myself to have the wealth of Croesus.' Jerome own commentaries on the twelve prophets are infused with Origen's exegesis, as are Jerome's Pauline commentaries. In 392 Jerome responded to critics who accused him of dependence on Origen in his

own exegetical writings by saying that far from being insulted, he saw in this the highest praise, since his express desire was to follow Origen's example in exegesis, which all men of discernment commend. The fact that Jerome would come to reproach a handful of Origen's interpretations during the Origenist controversy of the late 390s does not nullify this. The range of Jerome's reading in Origen was extensive, and it lasted till the end of his life. He treats Origen as the indispensable source. If he writes a commentary on a book or a verse of scripture, he looks for material in Origen to help him. If by chance he cannot find Origenian material, he apologizes. Jerome is most content when he has at his disposal for a single subject (as in the case of the Psalms, Isaiah, and Hosea) a large amount of Origen's works to compile. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, Jerome's Old Testament commentaries incorporate hundreds of textual readings from Origen's *Hexapla*. Unsurprisingly, Jerome's contemporaries accused him of compiling Origen. He did not deny the charge.

The fact is, without Origen, there would have been no St. Jerome. Origen's exegetical work is the principal source of Jerome's commentaries. Since the Latin church came to recognize St. Jerome as its greatest exegete and scripture scholar, it is clear that Origen, both directly and indirectly, helped the church of the west to understand the Word of God. In his posthumously published edition of Origen's works, Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536) described Origen as 'an outstanding doctor of the church,' 'a chosen instrument preserved by the providence of God to bring the fullest advantage of the Catholic church.' Many contemporary theologians agree with Erasmus on this.

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TERTULLIAN

Geoffrey D. Dunn

Life of Tertullian

Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullianus (Tertullian) was a North African Christian of the Severan age (Septimius Severus 193–211, Geta 209–211, and Caracalla 198–217) at the end of the second and beginning of the third centuries in Carthage. He is significant in that he is virtually the first and the most prolific Latin writing Christian in the pre-Nicene period, and someone who contributed enormously to Latin theological terminology. He was erudite, highly opinionated, polemical, zealous, and a rigorist verging on the extreme in his approach to Christian life and thought. His works give us tremendous insight into the struggles of a Christian community to understand itself both in relation to the world around it and its own scriptural heritage.

Scholarship on Tertullian received a fresh lease of life, particularly in the English-speaking world, with the 1971 publication of Timothy Barnes' revisionist biography. In particular, he challenged the information contained in Jerome's brief account in *De uiris illustribus* 53 that Tertullian was a presbyter, the son of a centurion, and left the church to join the Montanists, and in Eusebius' *Historia ecclesiastica* (2.2.4), where Tertullian is described as well-versed in Roman law and distinguished in Rome. Earlier scholars had wanted to identify Tertullian as the same person as the jurist mentioned in Justinian's *Digesta*. Barnes rejects these pieces of evidence. Tertullian recognized the church as composed of clerics and laity and in *De exhortatione castitatis* 12.2 identified himself as a lay person. Indeed, in *De ieiunio* 11.4 when he referred to all of us who are priests of God, his reference is obviously to the common priesthood of all Christians found in 1 Pet. 2:9.

In terms of Tertullian's legal background there is much confusion in popular literature about him. If we understand the word jurist to mean someone who was a legal scholar or legal theorist who offered jurisprudential commentary about the law, then there is no evidence that this was Tertullian's occupation. Eusebius' comments may derive simply from having read Tertullian's *Apologeticum* and coming to the conclusion that Tertullian was well read in terms of legal pronouncements about Christians. If we understand lawyer to mean someone who practised the law and appeared in courts on behalf of clients, then it has to be understood that no such profession existed as such in the Roman world. There certainly were men who acted in legal proceedings on behalf of clients, but they were not professional or full-time barristers, solicitors, or lawyers as we understand them today. They were simply highly educated individuals well trained in classical rhetoric, a large part of which centred on the skills required for speaking persuasively in a forensic setting about whether or not something had happened in the past; they did not require a specialist background in statutes and legislation.

Such men trained in the art of public speaking might never have practised as advocates, and those that did were engaged in many other aspects of the public life of leading citizens, so that describing them as lawyers or having legal training would be anachronistic (Rankin 1997).

It is clearly evident, as the work of Fredouille, Sider, and Dunn has demonstrated, that Tertullian was trained in classical rhetoric. This high level of education, what we may today term a tertiary education, was only available to those in the upper echelons of society. As such, Tertullian knew the canon of classical literature, as his writings frequently reveal. The fact that he had more than basic literacy was a rarity in society in general, and his education, social position, and ability must have made him a figure of quite some significance within the Carthaginian Christian community.

Further scanty information on Tertullian's life comes from comments gleaned from his writings. He had converted to Christianity at some point in his life, repentant at his past life (*De paenitentia* 1.1), but what actually triggered his conversion is not clear. He seems to have participated fully in the Roman way of life in Carthage, if we take his statement in *De spectaculis* 19.4 as acknowledgement that once (before conversion presumably) he had attended the various entertainments available like the arena, theatre, amphitheatre, and circus. His confession to adultery (*De resurrectione mortuorum* 59.4) must be taken as a reference to something that happened before he became Christian (given his views on reconciliation of sinful Christians). He was a married man, presumably married before his conversion since he confessed to adultery, and his wife was a Christian (*Ad uxorem*), but whether she was Christian before they married or converted at the same time as her husband (or at any other time) is not clear. He acknowledged his own impatience (*De patientia* 1.1).

Something must be said of Tertullian's Montanism. This movement, which may be characterized as prophetic, charistmatic, lay-centred, spiritualist, ascetical, and puritanical, emerged from Asia Minor in the middle of the second century (see Chapter 43 of this work). Although named today after one of its three founders, Montanus (the other two, Prisca or Priscilla and Maximilla, were women), Tertullian referred to the movement as New Prophecy. At its heart was a belief that divine revelation through the spirit (more commonly referred to as the Paraclete in Montanist circles) continued after the New Testament. It would seem that Tertullian associated more and more with them as his life progressed. Tertullian refers in *De anima* 9.4 to a woman who, during the liturgy, was possessed by an ecstatic vision from the spirit, and who shared that vision with her fellow New Prophecy adherents at the conclusion of the liturgy when everyone else had departed. He asserts that such visions are examined to determine their veracity. It seems clear that at this time these Montanists were not schismatic, were not rejected completely by their fellow Christians, and afforded women a leadership role (something with which Tertullian had no problem). Such private revelation increasingly threatened the authority of Scripture in the church and the authority of clerical leadership. Tertullian would argue that it complemented the Scriptures and cleared up ambiguities. We know most about Montanism through the writings of Tertullian and it is difficult to determine the extent to which he has recast the movement to reflect its reality within North Africa or his own conception of it. The point to which many scholars have recently drawn attention (Rankin, Trevett, Tabbernee, Dunn, and Wilhite) is that Tertullian never left the church nor was expelled from it. Some have even questioned whether Montanism in Carthage was even a movement rather than just the alignment of Tertullian's own thinking with that of the New Prophecy proponents in the east (Wilhite 2013). The fact that Cyprian read him on a daily basis (Jerome, *De uiris illustribus* 68) would indicate that he was not regarded as a heretic. Indeed, the fact that the African church always had a rigorist leaning (as evidenced by Cyprian's initial position in the Christian reaction to the Decian religious revival, even allowing for the popularity of the laxist reaction, and in Donatism) perhaps suggests that African churches were more comfortable with Tertullian's even more extreme opinions than might have been the case elsewhere in the Mediterranean world. The Tertullianists whom Augustine condemned (*De haer.* 86) as being separatists from Montanism might have been inspired by some of Tertullian's teaching, but there is no evidence that Tertullian himself was responsible for founding such a group (Powell 1975; Tabbernee 2007: 267–8).

We do not know much about Christianity in North Africa in the time before Tertullian. The first evidence comes from *Passio sanctorum Scillitanorum* and then *Passio sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* (see Figure 48.1). It reveals a Christianity that prized martyrdom highly. Carthage, refounded as a Roman colony towards the end of the republican period, had become the second largest city in the western Mediterranean. It preserved some of its Punic heritage in its completely remade Roman guise, and its commercial port was key for the transport of its vast agricultural and manufactured products being sent to sustain and support Rome. It had all the trappings of Roman life: a regular grid street pattern, baths near the sea, imperial administrative buildings atop the Byrsa hill, a forum, temples, an amphitheatre, circus (see Figure 48.2), theatre, and odeon, and a military port.

Figure 48.1 Remains of the Basilica Maiorum to the north of Carthage, regarded as burial location of Perpetua and Felicitas. Photo Geoffrey Dunn

Figure 48.2 Theatre in Carthage. Photo Geoffrey Dunn

It is likely that Christianity arrived in Carthage from a variety of places and that perhaps small communities distinguished by their indigenous language identities did not even know of each other's existence for quite some time and that the coalescing into a single community with a single bishop was a very slow process, but we cannot be sure (Telfer 1961; Dunn 2004: 14–15). Tertullian himself offers Rome as the source of Carthage's Christianity (*De praescr.* 36.1–3), but this was in the context of him needing to assert that the Carthaginian church followed the same *regula* as believed in apostolic churches like Corinth, Philippi, and Rome (Dunn 2001). There may well be an element of truth in Tertullian's claim, as there was the most frequent and constant trading connection between Carthage and Rome, but it need not be the entire story.

The researcher on Tertullian is greatly assisted by a number of valuable tools. One is G. Claesson (1974–5) *Index Tertullianeus*, 3 vols, Collection des Études Augustiniennes Série Antiquité 62–4, Paris, Études Augustiniennes. Another is the *Chronica Tertullianea et Cyprianea* found in *Revue d'Études Augustiniennes et Patristiques*, from 1975 onwards for Tertullian, with many of the annual reviews found in R. Braun *et al.* (1999) *Chronica Tertullianea et Cyprianea 1975–1994. Bibliographie critique de la première littérature latine chrétienne*, Collection des Études Augustiniennes Série Antiquité 157, Paris, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes. Finally there is the website www.tertullian.org.

Interpretation of Tertullian

An appreciation of Tertullian's rhetorical abilities is essential when it comes to interpreting his writing. There are a number of points to be made here. One is that across the thirty-one surviving works of Tertullian it is clear that his opinions are not always consistent. How is this to be explained? While it is true that in some instances he has changed his mind over time and it is generally acknowledged that as he grew older and became more and more influenced by Montanism his views became increasingly rigorist and hardline, in other instances Tertullian has not changed his mind and he was targeting his arguments towards his particular and varying audiences. Any good orator had the skills to be able to argue for or against a particular position, depending upon an opponent's position and the needs of a case. Thus, although establishing a chronological sequence for Tertullian's works is important and may help in tracking changes in Tertullian's thinking over time, just as important is to consider the intended readership of a particular work and the rhetorical tactics he employed.

The second point to make is that in seeking to persuade his readers to believe his point of view and adopt his recommendations, Tertullian was writing with some contrary opinion or suggestion in mind. He wrote principally because he had some opponent with whom to disagree. Thus, he was not writing some cool and dispassionate treatise in a systematic or comprehensive manner; he was engaged in combat seeking to refute the views that he rejected. If a belief or practice was not a point of contention, he did not need to discuss it. For this reason I tend to refer to Tertullian's works as pamphlets rather than treatises. While he dealt with theological topics, Tertullian was primarily an apologist, polemicist, or even pugilist. He used his rhetoric to win arguments. Although one would hesitate to say that Tertullian lied to win or that he was a relativist, he was capable of downplaying certain inconvenient facts in any particular argument, depending on his opponent and his readers. As a champion of Christianity, he is not alone in having presented his case this way, either in antiquity or more modern times.

Thus, Evans has argued persuasively that when he was writing to imperial authorities seeking to persuade them to stop persecuting Christians, Tertullian could offer some positive arguments about the nature and role of the empire and Christian participation within it. For example, against the charges that Christians were cannibals, murderers and atheists, Tertullian could argue that they participated fully in the life of the empire, even being found serving in the military. In works like *De corona militis*, written for internal consumption only, Tertullian argued that Christians ought not to serve in the army (Dunn 2015), and in pamphlets like *De idololatria* and *De spectaculis* he argued that Christians needed to distance themselves from the pagan world around them and stay away from

anything, including entertainment, that smacked of the worship of idols. Even though Tertullian wanted the empire to stop persecuting, he encouraged Christians to embrace martyrdom (*Ad martyras* and *De fuga in persecutione*) (Moss 2013). It was not that Tertullian had changed his mind on these questions, but that he presented those arguments likely to be the most persuasive to different audiences. If that meant that in order to save the lives of Christians from provincial persecution he had to hold back his own feelings, then he was prepared to do so.

When it comes to the interpretation of Scripture, the key source material for Tertullian in the construction of arguments against heretics or more moderate Christian opponents, this same point about Tertullian's rhetorical skill needs to be emphasized. While an older generation of scholars attempted unsuccessfully to find a single method of interpretation at work in Tertullian (Hanson, O'Malley, and Waszink), a better approach is to realize that Tertullian used whatever method suited his polemical and rhetorical purposes (Dunn 2006). Thus, if an opponent interpreted a passage allegorically or typologically, Tertullian would argue that it needed to be understood literally, while if the opponent argued for a literal reading, Tertullian would argue for a spiritual one. Sometimes he would appeal to the historical context of a passage to defend his own interpretation, and sometimes he would limit the relevance of a passage by insisting it was only relevant to its own historical context. He had the skills to make of a piece of evidence what he needed it to be.

Does this make Tertullian a relativist with no fixed beliefs? Not at all. His beliefs are revealed in the *partitio* or *propositio*, the position he takes in an argument. It was with the building blocks of arguments to support that thesis where he could be more flexible. The question of the correct interpretation of Scripture was central for Tertullian. The pamphlet in which we find the best exposition is *De praescriptione haereticorum*, in which Tertullian argues that because heretics are not Christian (for him, by definition, a Christian must only refer to one with correct belief), they have no right to argue from Scripture. How can one know if a particular interpretation or exegesis of a particular scriptural passage is correct or not? Tertullian's basic position is that of context: a correct reading of a particular passage is the one that aligns with the overall thrust of revelation. This revelation is what Tertullian terms the *regula fidei* ('rule of faith') (Countryman 1982; Ferguson 2013). It was taught by Christ, handed on by the apostles, recorded in Scripture, and lived in the church (*De praescr.* 13.6; 19.3; and 20.9). The *regula* is the Tradition by which any individual Christian claim or interpretation can be assessed and evaluated. We must not place Tertullian into a Reformation polemic that opposes Scripture (written revelation) with Tradition as unwritten revelation. Tradition is all revelation, written and unwritten, in such a way that the lived experience of Christian life must align with the privileged record in Scripture, and where any one passage of Scripture must be interpreted in the light of the totality of Scripture or the *regula* more generally as a whole (*De praescr.* 15–19). The task of being Christian was to embrace not question that *regula*. Here we find one of Tertullian's pithy and clever sayings: to know nothing against the *regula* is to know everything (*De praescr.* 14.5).

Tertullian's writing style in terms of the presentation and unfolding of arguments is frequently dense, concise, and obscure. It seems sometimes as though his mind is so much faster than his *stylus* that parts of his thought process never manage to get written down; his syllogisms often lack one of the necessary premises. He is often sarcastic and is possessed of a biting intellect and wit, inclined to ridicule, attracted to aphorism and a nice turn of phrase, more intent to dazzle his readers with his erudition than convince them to accept his argument. He often makes his point through exaggeration and overstatement rather than subtle logic. One wonders if much of what he wrote went over the heads of those who read or heard his works.

Tertullian and the world around him

We find Tertullian engaging with the world around him both directly in pamphlets written to provincial authorities (*Ad nationes*, *Apologeticum*, *Ad Scapulam*, and *De testimonio animae*) and indirectly in

pamphlets written to fellow Christians about how they should engage with that world (*De idololatria*, *De spectaculis*, *De corona militis*, *De pallio*, *Ad martyras*, and *De fuga in persecutione*) or with non-Christian others like Jews (*Aduersus Iudaeos*).

A work like *Apologeticum* is well-known because it has been of some interest to ancient historians. It incorporated and expanded much of the material found in *Ad nationes*. It is a forensic defence (adopting Swift against Keresztes) of Christianity before Roman provincial administrators against the charges that justified the persecution of Christians (see Figure 48.3). Whether or not any non-Christian official ever read it is not known; no doubt Christians who read it could take some comfort that no matter how much they suffered they were in the right. It opens with a plea for a fair trial (*Apol.* 1–3): if Christians are to be condemned it must be for being proven guilty of an actual crime as other criminals are and not simply because of an ignorant and prejudicial association of guilt with the fact of being Christian. Not only are Christians innocent of the charges of infanticide, cannibalism, and incest, Tertullian wanted to prove that pagans were the ones guilty of such abominations (*Apol.* 7–9). With regard to charges of atheism and sacrilege (*Apol.* 10–28) and treason (*Apol.* 29–45), Tertullian admitted the charges but used qualitative arguments to justify Christian practice: pagan gods did not exist and so therefore could not be worshipped, and Christians did not offer sacrifice to idols for the emperor but did pray to God for his safety and contributed to the defence of the empire. Christianity was not a separatist sect but an integral part of their neighbourhoods.

Ad Scapulam, written in 212–213 to the local African proconsul Scapula took a more deliberative line: it argued that the provincial government needed to put an end to its sporadic outbursts of persecution (Waszink 1959; Dunn 2002). Christian prayers restrained the wrath of God against a wicked society, and Christians themselves were a harmless element in society. Governors who targeted Christians usually met a sticky end; Tertullian was not adverse to offering an argument for self-preservation if it would do the trick. With intentional cheek Tertullian suggested that the best way to protect himself was for Scapula to become a Christian.

In *De testimonio animae*, Tertullian cross-examines the human soul as a reliable witness to prove the basic truths of Christianity as known by all people, Christian and non-Christian alike, despite whatever philosophy a non-Christian might have learnt. Tertullian emphasizes a kind of natural revelation provided by the soul. It points to the fact that God is one, good, and just and that there is life after death where the soul will be reunited with the body. It is here we find Tertullian's statement that a Christian is made, not born as one (*De test.* 1.7), which he makes in order to show that the soul is not a biased witness in his favour.

So much for Tertullian's ostensible direct dealings with non-Christians. What did he say to his fellow Christians about how they should interact with that non-Christian world in which they lived?

Figure 48.3 Model of the Roman administrative complex on Byrsa Hill, Byrsa Museum, Carthage. Photo Geoffrey Dunn

The picture is rather different from what we find in *Apologeticum*. Tertullian warned his co-religionists in *De idololatria* that the world was full of idolatry and that as Christians they needed to avoid such threats to their faith. Almost every aspect of life had a religious dimension to it, and since idolatry was a sin of denying the one true God, Christians needed to disengage from the world around them as much as possible and not be seen in accepting the existence of false gods in any way. This extended to entertainment, which, in addition to being cruel, lewd, and profane, acknowledged the existence of a false religious disposition (*De spectaculis*). It also applied to the wearing of military crowns awarded to soldiers for gallantry, valour, or even loyalty. Not only was the wearing of such decorations a participation in idolatry, but it conflicted with the Christian calling to be non-violent. Being a soldier was incompatible with the Christian vocation (only being permissible for those who were solders

Figure 48.4 Statue of man wearing toga, Archaeological Museum Théo Desplans, Vaison-la-Romaine, France. Photo Geoffrey Dunn

before becoming Christian) (*De corona militis*; Rordorf 1969; Dunn 2015). If such an opting out of normal life as Tertullian advocated brought the Christian to the attention of the authorities, so much the better. This would give them the opportunity to witness to their faith by their refusal to compromise with the idolatry of everyday life. They were not to avoid the opportunity and test persecution presented. If this resulted in imprisonment or even execution, this was the ultimate reward for the Christian, as *Ad martyras* and *De fuga in persecutione* advocate. Christianity was not an easy option as Tertullian saw it, but one that demanded total commitment.

In *De pallio*, Tertullian ostensibly praises the Greek *pallium* as the philosopher's garb over the Roman toga, while at the same time seeking to persuade his fellow Christians to adopt it (see Figure 48.4). Is this pamphlet, replete with reference to the classical canon and devoid of Scripture, for a Christian or non-Christian readership? Is it an example of his rejection of a Roman ethnic identity in favour of an African one (Wilhite 2007) or a Christian one? It is very much at home as a type of Second Sophistic piece of rhetoric in which Tertullian revels in his non-Christian learning. Is this a piece that offers a gendered piece of reasoning casting a new way to envisage Christian masculinity distinct from a Greek or even Roman feminism (Daniel-Hughes 2011)? Somehow the *pallium* is indicative of a superior Christian moral life and reveals the inner self.

Controversy has surrounded *Aduersus Iudaeos* with many scholars rejecting its attribution to Tertullian, or at least the attribution of the second half to him. Much of the argument there is also to be found in book four of *Aduersus Marcionem*, and the claim has been that someone plagiarized the material from the latter to add to an incomplete work of Tertullian's or else composed the whole thing as though it were Tertullian's. A recent investigation of the pamphlet from a rhetorical perspective (Dunn 2008) argues that the whole work has an integrity and coheres sufficiently to Tertullian's style as to warrant the attribution of the entire work to him, though as an unrevised draft. It is a piece of supersessionist literature arguing that God's covenant with the Jews has been replaced by the new covenant established in Jesus, a new covenant that was foretold in the old in terms of a new law, a new sacrifice, a new temple, a new Sabbath, and a new circumcision. This pamphlet is not a dialogue with a Jew, as many other anti-Judaic examples like Justin Martyr's was, but the revision of a failed dialogue as a kind of template for Christians to use in their own encounters and debates with Jews, presenting the Christian perspective. In book four of *Aduersus Marcionem*, Tertullian was not concerned to prove Judaism wrong, but to prove against Marcion that Christianity has emerged from and fulfilled Judaism rather than appearing unannounced (Dunn 2013).

Tertullian and heretics

Quite a number of Tertullian pamphlets are directed against heretics: Christians who taught such a twisted and perverted version of Christianity that they could no longer be considered Christian (*Aduersus Marcionem*, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, *Aduersus Hermogenem*, *Aduersus Valentinianos*, *Aduersus Praxean*, *Scorpiace*, *De carne Christi*, *De resurrectione mortuorum*, and *De anima*).

The five books of *Aduersus Marcionem* make it his largest composition by far. It was revised three times over the course of more than a decade. Montanist references must have been inserted late in the revision process and are not indicative of the whole work being written late in Tertullian's literary career. Marcion has recently received close attention from Judith Lieu, who presents him as a distinctive and creative figure within second-century Christianity (2015). Marcion was a dualist from Asia (and whether or not he was Gnostic is something still debated among scholars – see Gager – with Barnes for one rejecting some identification) who lived a couple of generations before Tertullian. He rejected the Hebrew Scriptures for presenting a picture of God as being vengeful and judgmental in contrast with the loving God revealed by Jesus. For him the God of the Hebrew Scriptures was a lesser god (a demiurge) who was responsible for the creation of the world, and the supreme God revealed by Jesus was previously unknown and is unknowable. It would seem that for Marcion, Jesus was docetic (only appearing to have a human nature) and that there was no resurrection of the flesh. When it came

to the New Testament itself, Marcion would only accept as canonical a modified version of Luke and a number of the Pauline letters, largely because the other texts were too dependent upon a Jewish heritage. The question of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments was an important one for Christians to consider and Marcion's teaching made them do just that. Indeed, it remains important today when we find some Christian fundamentalists (at the opposite extreme to Marcion) preaching from the Old Testament as though it was of equal standing with the New.

In response to Marcion, Tertullian wanted to show that there is only one god and that the creator god is one and the same as the Father of Jesus and that the latter is not some previously unknown deity. Further, he wanted to show that the Jesus who came was precisely the messiah as promised by the creator god of the Hebrew Scriptures. In book one Tertullian deals with the question of the existence of Marcion's second god. Of course the god who is Father of Jesus exists but only as the same singular supreme deity who created the world and operated in the lives of the Jewish people. Tertullian offers rhetorical arguments from definition (*Adu. Marc.* 1.3–7), person and action (*Adu. Marc.* 1.8–21), and character or quality (*Adu. Marc.* 1.22–29) to show this. Marcion's supreme god cannot be God. In book two Tertullian shifted focus, to show that the creator god was indeed God, fulfilling all the conditions one would expect of a true deity. Book three links the prophecies of the Old Testament with their fulfilment in the person of Jesus (while at the same time Tertullian could be as critical of the Jews for failing to appreciate the fulfilment of these prophecies as he was of Marcion for refusing to accept that he had been prophesied). In books four and five Tertullian examines Marcion's mutilated gospel and letters to show that even here there still is a link between Jesus and Old Testament prophecy (Cooper 2013). Of course, one could turn some of these arguments back against Tertullian, arguing that he made Old Testament prophecy fit in with the life of Jesus, rather than actually showing that Jesus fits the prophecies.

We have already considered *De praescriptione haereticorum* in some detail above. Suffice it here to say that although Tertullian said that heretics (and he refers in particular to Marcion, Valentinus, and Apelles) had no right to argue using the Scriptures and that this made all their posturing invalid and not worth listening to, this did not stop him from then engaging in argument with them anyway. Even by the end of writing this pamphlet Tertullian realized that it was insufficient (*De praescr.* 44.14) and that he would need to write more detailed rebuttals against individual heretics.

Here I want to refer to one of the famous passages from this pamphlet (*De praescr.* 7.9): 'What has Athens in common with Jerusalem? What has the academy in common with the church? What have heretics in common with Christians?' Many interpreters have taken this as a simple rejection of philosophy (Athens) in favour of revelation (Jerusalem). In the context of arguing against heretics who appealed to the wisdom of the world (philosophy), Tertullian needed to downplay the relevance of philosophy. Human wisdom often failed to discern the truth that is contained in revelation. Tertullian's focus was not on philosophy itself but the heretics who made use of it in the form of Gnosticism. In line with the overall argument of the pamphlet, Tertullian's position was not that one needed philosophy to search after eternal and metaphysical truths; they had been provided already in the *regula*. What one needed was faith to accept what God had revealed (Osborn 1997). Philosophy could be helpful in explaining or defending such truth rather than in finding it. In other places, Tertullian appealed to natural reason (much as Paul did in Rom. 2:12–16) as being (at least sometimes) able to grasp the mysteries of God. Even if he did not allude often to it, it is clear sentence after sentence in his massive output that Tertullian knew and could use philosophical insight and reasoning if it helped his case. Indeed, in *De praescr.* 7.6 Tertullian criticized those who used Aristotelian dialectic to create clever arguments, which is just what he did at almost every opportunity! This is certainly an occasion where one should not take Tertullian at face value.

Possibly like Marcion, Hermogenes, a contemporary of Tertullian who might have lived in Carthage, postulated a dualistic divinity (Waszink 1955; Hiltbrunner 1956). However, it was not an Old Testament and a New Testament god for Hermogenes but God and pre-existent, uncreated matter out of which God fashioned the universe that formed the pairing. In *Aduersus Hermogenem*

and the non-extant *De censu animae Aduersus Hermogenem* Tertullian argued that if matter were eternal it really would be a second god. Hermogenes, following Platonism and his own interpretation of Scripture, could not accept God creating *ex nihilo* since that would make God the author of evil and, since God is Lord, God needed to be lord of something from eternity. To preserve the oneness of God Tertullian asserts creation *ex nihilo*. He also has to assert that God must be responsible for the creation of evil as much as God is responsible for the creation of good (*Adu. Herm.* 16) but pointing out the inconsistencies in Hermogenes' reasoning.

De anima was also composed to confront Hermogenes. In the lost *De censu animae Aduersus Hermogenem* Tertullian had discussed the origins of the soul. Here he discussed the nature of the soul (Leal 2001). He was much influenced by Stoic concepts, as by his reading of Scripture and Montanist prophecy, and rejected Platonic ones, such as the idea that the soul is eternal and incorporeal. For Tertullian the soul is corporeal (but invisible), having its own type of body. Tertullian distinguished corporeality from materiality. It is not made from pre-existent matter as Hermogenes argued but is created at the same time as the flesh of the human person, such that flesh and soul derive from one's parents (traducianism) rather than being a new creation of God (creationism). The soul is the animating force of the flesh. The latter is the prevailing Christian view today, but different from the Platonic view of the eternal creation of all souls. It is the traducian view that enabled Tertullian to assert original sin as something deriving from Adam and not directly from God. While the soul is immortal (as distinct from eternal) and separates from the flesh at death – although traducianism does not explain how the soul can have immortality or any divine link, which has to come from a distinction between instrumental and efficient causes – they will be reunited.

Praxeas, like Sabellius, defending the oneness of God, had ended up so asserting the *monarchia* of God that the persons of the Trinity were modes of existence or guises of God who sometimes acted as Father, at other times as Son, and at other times as Spirit (Verhoeven 1951). In other words, in order not to separate God into three, thinkers like Praxeas denied any distinction within the Godhead. This modalist monarchianism is known as patripassianism, since, following Tertullian's rebuttal, thinkers like Praxeas ended up with the Father becoming incarnate and suffering on the cross, even though he admits that Praxeas tried to avoid this position. The problem was not with the idea of God suffering, but with the idea of the Father suffering. His response was that God is a trinity of persons, where unity is asserted on the level of substance, and distinction is asserted on the level of persons active in the divine economy. It is here that Tertullian contributed Latin terms such as *substantia*, *persona*, and *trinitas* to western Christian theology. The pamphlet also contains christological statements that we cannot accept Jesus is flesh and Christ is spirit, neither that humanity and divinity mixed to create a third reality, but that in the one person of the incarnate Son divine and human substances co-exist. Some have seen Praxeas as a pseudonym, possibly for Callistus, bishop of Rome (217–22) (Brent 1995: 525–35).

In *Aduersus Valentinianos*, Tertullian took issue with Valentinus, an Egyptian Gnostic who had ended up in Rome, and his followers for their Pythagorean cosmology. We know much more about their system of belief, which seemed to differ between east and west, since the discovery of Valentinian texts at Nag Hammadi (Thomassen 2008). Not only did Tertullian take issue with them, but he was following in the footsteps of Irenaeus who devoted much energy to combatting this heretical sect. This complicated system posits a series of divine emanations (the aeons) constituting the *pleroma*, the highest of whom is the unknowable God and one of whom, Sophia or Wisdom, who was ejected from the *pleroma* and was the mother of the Demiurge who created the world. In the world people contained a divine spark or spiritual seed (*pneuma*) trapped within matter, and the task for salvation was to free the spirit from its entrapment in matter, which could only be achieved through secret knowledge (*gnosis*) and a sinless existence based on that knowledge, which was passed on by Jesus who is distinct from the Son of the unknowable god. Tertullian did not so much argue with this Gnosticism as ridicule its complicated mythology, since the Valentinians held that their gnosis was not subject to rational understanding.

Scorpiace addressed for Christian readers the heretical belief that martyrdom was pointless. This idea, coming from the Valentinians, Tertullian describes as poison, like that from a scorpion (see Figure 48.5). For him, martyrdom is good because it is willed by God and is a consequence of resisting idolatry (Dunn 2004).

Tertullian also addressed docetic opinions that held that Jesus only *seemed* (in Greek *dokei* means 'he/she/it seems') to have human flesh. For Tertullian unless the flesh of Christ were real there was no possibility for human salvation and he devoted what amounts to a two-part pamphlet (*De carne Christi* and *De resurrectione mortuorum*) as his defence. Tertullian's targets were Marcion (*De carn.* 1–5), Apelles (*De carn.* 6–9), and Valentinus (*De carn.* 10–16). Tertullian sought to demonstrate that Jesus' body or flesh was real, earthly, and human (Otten 1997; Dunn 2007). The purpose of establishing the true human flesh of Jesus was because of what that meant for the rest of human flesh: the possibility of resurrection and salvation, which is what we find discussed in *De resurrectione mortuorum* (Sider 1969). Tertullian could point to Pythagoras, Empedocles, and Plato who all believed in some kind of life after death. The Scriptures too, in both testaments, point to the resurrection of the flesh provided that one does not try to allegorize the passages away. The revelation of the spirit in his own time has made clear how the Scriptures are to be interpreted correctly on this point.

It is in *De carne Christi* that we find another of Tertullian's well-known but perhaps frequently misinterpreted statements. The Son of God truly died in the flesh and rose again. Without this there is no Christian faith at all. Tertullian is not ashamed of what appears on the surface to be shameful: the Son of God died. It is credible because it is improbable (*credibile est quia ineptum*). He rose again. It is certain because it is impossible (*certum est, quia impossibile*) (*De carn.* 5.4). He did not write *credo quia absurdum*. He was not opposing faith with reason and opting for the former over the latter. The paradox is only apparent, not real (Décarie 1961; Osborn 1997). It is a rhetorical claim (much as we find in Aristotle, *Rh.* 2.23, 2400a5, although Osborn 1997: 53–4 finds it limited) that continues to be employed and believed in all kinds of circumstances today, when we find people asserting that something is so crazy it just may work, or that something has to be true because you cannot make this stuff up. Tertullian's position is that if Christians were making up their religion and wanted to win non-Christian adherents,

Figure 48.5 Mosaic of scorpion in Bardo Museum, Tunis. Photo Geoffrey Dunn

they would have made up a story relatively easy to accept. The story of the Son of God taking on flesh, dying, and rising again is unlikely to be believed and is therefore more likely to be true. It is a form of argument commonly used and accepted; it is not an admission of fideism.

Tertullian and Christian practice

The remainder of Tertullian's pamphlets were directed to his fellow Christians, whose commitment to their faith in action was not as rigorous and fanatical as his own (*De cultu feminarum*, *De uirginibus uelandis*, *De baptismo*, *De oratione*, *De paenitentia*, *De pudicitia*, *De patientia*, *Ad uxorem*, *De exhortatione castitatis*, *De monogamia*, and *De ieiunio*). In some of these pamphlets, we shall notice a chronological hardening of attitudes over time as Tertullian gave full vent to his rigorist views. Within his sights were those Christians whose living of Christianity was not as fervent and zealous as his own.

Several of his works turned attention specifically to women. Since their world was more the domestic than the public sphere, I am considering them here. In part they were shaped in reaction to the world around him, but at their heart they do have an internal focus. In book two of *De cultu feminarum*, written first, Tertullian advised women to dress modestly and not surrender to vanity; it was a waste and promoted lust (see Figure 48.6). In the later book one, there is a more strident tone. It is here that Tertullian refers to women as the gateway of the devil (*De cult*. 1.1.1), just as Eve was, a statement that has drawn particular attention from modern feminist scholars, although such negativity is not the extent of Tertullian's evaluation of women (Turcan 1971, 1990; Forrester Church 1975; Daniel-Hughes 2011; Clark 2013). In the first book Tertullian also defended the notion that Enoch ought to be counted as a scriptural text.

In the two books of *Ad uxorem*, Tertullian advised his Christian wife in the first book not to remarry after his death and, in the second, to marry only another Christian if she had to remarry at all. Tertullian's ideas here were not his own, but came directly from Paul, particularly 1 Corinthians 7. Widowhood and celibacy were a better option than second marriage. Although the work ends with a great praise of the equality, unity, and beauty of the marriage partnership (*Ad ux*. 2.8), it is clear that he was restricting himself to a consideration of how it centred on the shared faith of a Christian couple. In *De exhortatione castitatis* Tertullian urged a Christian widower not to remarry after the recent death of his wife. Although it was permissible, it was an indulgence by God (*De exhort*. 3)

Figure 48.6 The Lady of Carthage mosaic, Byrsa Museum, Carthage. Photo Geoffrey Dunn

and not an expression of the divine will, which is found in 1 Cor. 7:27. The practice found in the Hebrew Scriptures has been replaced with that found in the New Testament. Marriage itself flows from desire, which is sinful. The widower would be better living a life of continence. In the even later *De monogamia*, Tertullian rejected remarriage as serial polygamy.

In *De oration*, Tertullian examines the Lord's Prayer (*De orat*. 1–9) in order to make commentary about how a Christian ought to pray (*De orat*. 10–19, 23–9), particularly for the end of the world (in contrast with what he wrote in *Apologeticum*). For a Christian to pray effectively, they must be in a state of internal purity. Then the work deviates into a consideration of whether or not virgins are required to be veiled when in church (*De orat*. 20–2). 1 Corinthians 11 had demanded that women

Figure 48.7 Statue of a veiled woman, Vatican Museum, Vatican City. Photo Geoffrey Dunn

be veiled, and the argument was put that female virgins no matter what their age were not women, because 'woman' was understood to mean a married female. In *De uirginibus uelandis*, Tertullian revisited this question of the veiling of virgins and was insistent that from the time of puberty all Christian females needed to be veiled (Dunn 2004, 2005) (see Figure 48.7).

Although in a pamphlet like *De corona militis* Tertullian could praise custom, in this work he condemned it, because the custom of mature virgins not being veiled, thinking that they were exempt, was one he rejected. For Tertullian the female virgins he referred to included anyone who was simply unmarried, but there is a sense that he had particular interest in those who had made some kind of vow to preserve their virginity. There is no doubt that Tertullian, even though his Montanist inclinations afforded women prophetic roles within the community (but, along with the rest of the church, denied them formal sacerdotal roles), shares with others of his time a view of women as second-class; but, given his personality, these views are expressed in a more extreme manner when compared with others.

De baptismo was written to refute a heretical woman (possibly a Marcionite or a Gnostic) who believed that baptism was unnecessary. Tertullian wrote to catechumens to insist on the necessity of

Figure 48.8 Sixth-century basilica with attached baptistery, Carthage. Photo Geoffrey Dunn

baptism (see Figure 48.8). Like *De oration*, it shows no influence of Montanist thinking. Previously, Tertullian had written in Greek on why heretical baptism was insufficient for salvation. Here, Tertullian discussed the appropriateness of God's choice of water for initiation and the forgiveness of sins (*De bapt*. 1–9), two particular questions about the nature of John's baptism, which was about repentance rather than forgiveness or the imparting of the spirit, and the salvation of the apostles, since they did not seem to have been baptized (*De bapt*. 10–16), and practical considerations about the celebration of baptism (*De bapt*. 17–20).

In *De paenitentia*, Tertullian addressed the question of the forgiveness of post-baptismal sin. Tertullian was worried that too easy a process of reconciliation would mean that people would not take the baptismal promise to turn away from sin seriously enough. Tepid Christianity was his major concern. In baptism all sins were forgiven, yet baptism was not to be celebrated too readily – a person must have manifested growth in conversion so that there was a well-founded belief that they would persevere in living out their baptismal promises – yet it must not be put off too long in the false belief that one could go on sinning in the meantime. Yet, for those who did sin after baptism Tertullian did allow one opportunity for reconciliation for those who had manifested suitable repentance. In *De pudicitia*, in response to a bishop who saw himself as *pontifex maximus* or bishop of bishops (*De pud*. 1.6) – and unlike Brent, I would follow Barnes in seeing this as the bishop of Carthage not Rome – with the power to forgive all sins, even adultery and fornication, Tertullian argued that the single post-baptismal forgiveness that could be ritualized only applied to minor, not major, sins. It was to be left to God to judge how much a major sinner repented and to offer forgiveness; for the church to do so would be to risk its purity and integrity.

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49
PERPETUA AND FELICITAS

Shira L. Lander and Ross S. Kraemer

Introduction

The place of Perpetua and Felicitas within a series of profiles of prominent early Christians is unique in this collection of essays. First, and perhaps most obviously, they are the only women. Second, and perhaps more importantly, whereas all the men profiled here are well-known through their own extensive writings, or through the detailed writings of others, Perpetua and Felicitas are essentially known only from a work narrating their horrific martyrdom in North Africa in the early third century CE that claims to incorporate Perpetua's personal diary account of her imprisonment and divinely inspired visions.[1] Third, all of what scholars claim to know about these two women is gleaned from the so-called *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* (hereafter *Passio*), a martyrdom narrative concerned chiefly with their recent conversion to Christianity, their exemplary deaths, and in the case of Perpetua, but not Felicitas, her revelations.[2] The account offers scant biographical data for Perpetua, and virtually none for Felicitas. Thus, writing their 'profiles' is substantially different from writing a profile of an Origen, an Augustine or an Athanasius.

Perpetua and Felicitas are by no means the only female martyrs in early Christian traditions. The fourth-century church historian, Eusebius of Caesarea, includes a Letter of the Churches of Lyons and Viennes narrating the martyrdom of an enslaved woman named Blandina and three male companions in 177 CE (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.1.3–63). The so-called *Acts of the Scilitan Martyrs* appears to reproduce the trial account of six Christians, three women and three men, in Carthage, North Africa, in 180 CE. What distinguishes Perpetua, and Felicitas by association, is the claim that a portion of the *Passio* is written by Perpetua herself, *manu sua*, in her own hand.[3] If true, as contemporary scholarship generally takes it to be, Perpetua is the first and only known Christian woman to write in her own name before the fourth century CE.[4] Furthermore, because this portion of the *Passio* (re)presents Perpetua's experiences, emotions, and visions, it constitutes, if authentic, the only first-person account of a Christian woman's experiences. Its potential significance, then, is inestimable, and contemporary feminist scholarship in particular has been much taken with Perpetua for precisely these reasons.[5] A divide in Perpetua scholarship, however, aligns with the widening fault lines among historians between two types of historicism, the neo-traditional and the new.[6] While most scholars consider the *Passio* and its ancient secondary witnesses in patristic writings, other martyrdom accounts, martyrologies, and early Christian art to reflect actual historical persons whose historical experiences can be cautiously teased out of the narrative, others consider the history of those persons—if indeed they were historical—to

be irretrievable. In this latter view, the *Passio* texts can only provide literary personae in their rhetorically constructed context for examination, including the possibility that the diary portions of the text are pseudonymous.[7]

Synopsis of the *Passio*

Two of the ten medieval manuscripts of the *Passio* open with a prologue in defense and praise of recent visions. All versions then give a brief narrative frame (2.1–2), relating that at an unspecified time and place, for an undisclosed reason, a number of catechumens (recent converts who had not yet been baptized) were placed under arrest. Three were men: Revocatus, Saturninus, and Secundulus. Two were women: Felicitas, described as the conserva (probably co-slave) of Revocatus, and Vibia Perpetua, described as well-educated (*liberaliter instituta*), elite (*honesta*), and properly married (*matronaliter nupta*). Both her parents were still living, as were two brothers, one a catechumen but himself inexplicably not arrested.[8] Although Perpetua was still nursing a baby boy, the entire *Passio* is silent on the identity and whereabouts of her husband.

It is difficult to reconstruct the specific experiences of the catechumens from the section attributed to Perpetua herself. It appears that between the time she was arrested and the time she and the others were incarcerated in a public prison, Perpetua had occasion both to argue with her father over her Christianity (3.1–3), and to receive formal baptism (3.5a). Once imprisoned, the catechumens are held in a particularly hellish location (3.5b–6), but move to a more comfortable place after the deacons Tertius and Pomponius bribe the prison guards. Perpetua takes advantage of the respite to nurse her famished baby and then hand him over temporarily to the care of her mother and brother until she receives permission to keep the child with her (3.8–9).

At this point, the first of four visions is related in Perpetua's voice (4.1–10). Prompted by her brother, Perpetua asks for and receives a vision in which she ascends a bronze ladder into heaven, together with Saturus, the catechumens' teacher who was not initially arrested with them, but who is also subsequently martyred. At the foot of the ladder lies an enormous dragon; all along the sides of the ladder are sharp weapons. Once safely in heaven, Perpetua encounters a gray-haired man in shepherd's clothing milking sheep in an immense garden populated with thousands of people in white garments. Welcoming Perpetua as his child, the man offers her some of the milk. When she consumes it, all present say 'amen,' and Perpetua wakes with a sweet taste in her mouth. Recounting the vision to her brother, Perpetua realizes that the Christians are fated to suffer and die.

Shortly thereafter, a rumor spreads that the catechumens are to have a hearing (5.1a). Perpetua's father appears just in time to beg his daughter once again to reconsider (5.1b–5). Although she claims to pity his old age, Perpetua regrets that he cannot fathom her decision to be martyred (5.6). Abruptly summoned sometime later to a formal hearing in the forum, she resists her father's importuning yet a third time, confesses to being a Christian and is sentenced, along with her companions, to fight with the beasts (6.1–6). Her father is subjected to a public beating (6.5).

Back in prison, Perpetua sends Pomponius, who seems to have free access to the prisoners, to fetch her baby. The child has apparently been returned to the care of Perpetua's father, although the account provides no explanation of when or how (6.7). Scholars have noted that the paternity rights of the child's father would only be superseded by Perpetua's father if the marriage was *sine manu*, or if he and Perpetua were not married at all.[9] Her father refuses to yield the child, but conveniently, if not miraculously, the child loses interest in nursing and Perpetua's milk supply dries up without causing her any discomfort (6.8).

Soon thereafter, Perpetua's second vision occurs (7.3–8), in which she sees her deceased younger brother Dinocrates suffering the traditional torments of the unfortunate dead. He is hot, thirsty, pale, and still bears the marks of the facial cancer that killed him. In front of the child she sees a pool of water, but the refreshment the dead seek is beyond his small reach. Perpetua prays for Dinocrates for days, until the prisoners are transferred to a military prison. That night, she has another vision (8.1–4),

in which she sees Dinocrates clean and refreshed, a scar where the wound had been, and the rim of the pool now lowered to a height he can reach. Above the rim floats a golden bowl, from which she sees Dinocrates drink his fill and then go off to play. Waking, Perpetua realizes that Dinocrates suffers no more.

As the date of her contest approaches, Perpetua's father returns a fourth time. Perpetua repeats her sorrow for him, but does not relate her reply, if any, to him. Her fourth and final vision (10.1–13) is set the day before the contest. Led by Pomponius into the arena, Perpetua finds herself to be a man, set to fight a hideous-looking Egyptian. An immensely tall man clad in a purple tunic and marvelous sandals of gold and silver presides over the fight. Ultimately, Perpetua triumphs over the Egyptian: while her assistants sing psalms, she receives a branch with golden apples from the man. After he kisses her, saying 'Peace be with you, my daughter,' she walks out through the Gate of Life. Waking, she understands that she is to fight the devil and emerge victorious.

With this vision, the portion of the *Passio* ascribed to Perpetua ends and another vision, ascribed to Saturus, follows immediately (11.1–13.8). In this lengthiest of all the visions, Saturus and Perpetua, now dead, are carried by four angels to a heavenly garden, where they join other martyrs not mentioned in the account ascribed to Perpetua, and are greeted and kissed by the Lord himself, an aged man with white hair and a youthful face. Having been sent off by elders, Perpetua and Saturus find the bishop Optatus and the presbyter Aspasius feuding.[10] When the two men implore them to intervene, Perpetua and Saturus demur, but Perpetua then speaks with them in Greek. Ultimately, angels instruct Optatus and Aspasius to settle their own dispute.

The remainder of the *Passio* (14.1–21.11) recounts the deaths of the martyrs, with the most extensive description reserved for that of Perpetua and Felicitas. Only now does the reader learn that Felicitas was eight months pregnant, and that she and her companions prayed successfully that she might deliver early. Otherwise, she would have had to wait to die until the birth of her child, since Roman law forbade the execution of a pregnant woman.

On the birthday of the emperor's son Geta, the catechumens are sent into the arena to reenact some mythological drama. Despite Perpetua's final vision of her combat as a man with the Egyptian,

Figure 49.1 Martyrdom of Perpetua, Felicity, Revocatus, Saturninus and Secundulus, from the Menologion of Basil II, *c.* 1000 CE, in the Vatican Library. Photo Wikimedia Commons

she and Felicitas are stripped naked, clad in netting, and sent to fight a wild heifer, the sex of the animal matching the sex of the martyrs (the men fought an assortment of leopard, bear, and wild boar). Yet none of the martyrs dies of these wounds. Instead, all assent to the wishes of the perverse crowd and have their throats cut by the waiting gladiator. Perpetua herself must guide his hand into her throat after he initially misses and strikes a bone. The *Passio* concludes with a brief peroration comparable in style and theme to the more lengthy prologue.

Assessing the historicity of the *Passio* and other Perpetua traditions

The accounts of Perpetua's arrest, last days, and martyrdom are usually titled *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*: some add their co-martyrs Saturus and Revocatus. The texts exist only in medieval manuscripts dating from the ninth through the seventeenth centuries. Apart from one Greek manuscript, all nine are Latin. The variety of the manuscripts presents obstacles to reconstructing a literary history for the Perpetua traditions. Moreover, their usefulness for reconstructing an historical account is hampered by conflicting and indeterminate historical references.

The situation is further complicated by the existence of another set of Perpetua materials, the *Acta*.[11] Five times more manuscripts of the *Acta* than the *Passio* survive, indicating that the medieval popularity of the *Acta* eclipsed the *Passio* (Kitzler 2015: 99). The relative brevity of the *Acta* (approximately one-quarter the length of the *Passio*), suggests they may have been composed for public recitation rather than private reading (LeClercq 1939: 409; Heffernan 2012: 442). Although the earliest extant Perpetua manuscript is of the *Acta*, scholars believe that the traditions contained in these manuscripts but not in the *Passio* are late (not before the fifth century) and factually unreliable, thereby justifying their omission from historical reconstructions of Perpetua's life and death (Van Beek 1936: 98; Amat 1996: 271; Kitzler 2015: 98).

A majority of scholars believe that Latin is the original language of the *Passio*.[12] All the traditions set Perpetua's martyrdom in North Africa, where Latin, Greek, and indigenous Punic were spoken. The texts either situate Perpetua's arrest in a small city about 30 miles southwest of Carthage called 'Thuburbo minor,' in what is modern Tunisia, or they give no location for the events of the story

Figure 49.2 The amphitheatre at Carthage. Photo J. C. N. Coulston

(Greek *Passio* 2.1; Acta 1.1). Many scholars take the amphitheatre description to refer to Carthage, since it would have been the only city large enough to contain an arena fully equipped with soldiers' quarters and a prison, and it was the seat of the provincial governor (Rives 1995: 78; Amat 1996: 22–5).

The texts also do not agree on the precise dates of Perpetua's martyrdom. The title of the Latin *Passio* gives the nones of March (also *Acta* 9.5), while the Greek has early February. The earliest calendar on which Perpetua and Felicitas are listed, the Feriale Ecclesiae Romanae, dated 354, lists the March date (Mommsen 1891: 9.71). Scholars have tended to accept the date commemorated on the Roman calendar, 7 March, without historical warrant.[13] The fact that the February date corresponds to Perpetua's commemoration on the eastern calendar suggests that the traditions reflect alternative dates for commemorating Perpetua in different martyrological traditions rather than useful historical evidence for dating her martyrdom (Robinson 1891: 17).

Attempts to date the text are based on the assumption that Perpetua's martyrdom itself can be securely dated, accepting the historicity of the events as they are presented in the narrative. The only contemporaneous evidence for Perpetua outside the *Passio* is from the North African Christian writer, Tertullian, who adduces the heavenly vision of Perpetua, 'the most heroic martyr,' as evidence that only the privileged few can enter heaven before the Final Resurrection (Tertullian, *De anima* 55.4). Since Tertullian had died by the Valerian persecution, he could not have known a Perpetua tradition which placed the martyrdom in the mid third century.[14]

External verification of Perpetua's martyrdom relies both on Tertullian's witness and on historical evidence for persecutions that occurred during his lifetime. Thus, most scholars date the martyrdom to the reign of Septimius Severus.[15] The fourth-century church historian Eusebius relates a Severan persecution in Alexandria, yet he mentions neither North Africa nor Perpetua and her companions (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.4–5).The late and suspect *Historia Augusta*, a compilation of Roman history, relates a Severan edict that puts Christianity in the same category as Judaism: 'it is forbidden to become Jews,' but a prohibition against proselytism seems likely to be anachronistic.[16] Thus, even accepting the martyrdom's historicity, attempts to explain Perpetua's death as punishment for her conversion are unfounded.

If Severus had not issued a recent ban on conversion, he might have encouraged a climate of episodic persecution of Christians, similar to the situation reported by Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia-Pontus in the early second century CE, in his letter to Trajan (Pliny, *Ep*. 10.96–97). The *Passio* conveys a sense of randomness about Perpetua's arrest which would comport with such a climate. The arrest of the 'young catechumens' occurs without context or explanation and the passive construction (*Passio* 2.1) conceals those who may have ordered the arrest and why. There is no mention of mass arrests or widespread executions.[17] The friends and family who visit the martyrs in prison are not afraid to be associated with them. People are not fleeing to avoid arrest and persecution, or to avoid appearing before make-shift outdoor courts to prove their allegiance to the Roman deities, as is the case in representations of more systematic persecution (*pace* Cyprian, Lactantius, and Eusebius). When this group of Christians 'suddenly' receives a hearing at the forum (*Passio* 6.1), the governor merely asks Perpetua to perform a sacrifice 'for the health of the emperors.' When she demurs, he then asks, 'Christiana es?' to which she replies affirmatively (*Passio* 6.3–4).[18] The crime of being Christian, insofar as it prevents this Roman matron from performing her civic duty, is Hilarianus' reason for condemning her to the beasts (*Passio* 6.6). Like the court accounts of Pliny, the martyr's hearing seems to indicate that admitting to being Christian and refusing to sacrifice sufficed to incur punishment.[19]

An early dating for the martyrdom and the *Passio* depends not only on demonstrating the historical plausibility of these events.[20] It also depends on interpretations of seemingly historical references in the *Passio*. Many scholars identify the governor Hilarianus, successor of Minucius Timinianus (*Passio* 6.3–5, 18.8), with the P. Aelius Hilarianus mentioned by Tertullian (*Ad Scapulam* [*To Scapula*] 3.1), and the Caesar in celebration of whose birthday the martyrs are to be ceremonially killed (*Passio* 7.9) as Geta, the emperor's son, who received the title 'Caesar'

in the year 198 (later rejected for the throne and ostracized by his brother, Caracalla; Heffernan 2012: 72–8). The problematic nature of each piece of evidence renders a Severan date tenuous at best.[21]

The problem of dating should itself alert the careful reader to the difficulty of identifying the extant medieval manuscripts with a text dating back to the early third century. Tertullian mentions Perpetua only in a passing reference and refers neither to a text nor to a commemoration. No other third-century literature, inscription, or author mentions her. Attempts to demonstrate the *Passio*'s literary influence on other North African martyrdom narratives (of Montanus and Lucius and Marianus and Jacobus) as well as Pontius' *Life of Cyprian*, depend on an early dating of the *Passio*.[22] Despite the fact that Tertullian and Cyprian, the mid third-century Bishop of Carthage, both mention offerings and prayers on behalf of the departed (Tertullian, *De corona militis* 3; Cyprian, *Ep.* 12.2.1), neither mentions the practice of reading a text on the anniversary of a martyr's death. By itself, Tertullian's reference may merely evidence a local oral tradition and not acquaintance with the *Passio*, although many scholars read it this way. If an early literary tradition can be traced to the date of the martyrdom itself, that tradition may have only consisted of a transcription of Perpetua's visions as either written or dictated by her from prison. It is likely that the text as represented by the medieval manuscripts was shaped and reshaped by various editors over the centuries, and it is not until the fourth century that these artifacts of Perpetua's martyrdom, text, and commemoration, can be securely identified.

The earliest evidence of Perpetua's commemoration appears on the liturgical Calendar of Rome in 354.[23] The calendar attests to the saint's widespread popularity, indicated by a mid fourth-century anonymous Greek homily on the Armenian martyr Polyeuctus that compares the soldier's vision to that of Perpetua,[24] and a late fourth-century Spanish sarcophagus depicting scenes of Perpetua's visions and martyrdom (Figure 49.3).[25] Canon 36 of the 393 Synod of Hippo and subsequent canon 47 of the Council of Carthage (397) permits commemorative texts such as the *Passio* to be read even though they are not canonical writings, reflecting a trend also apparent in Palestine and Asia Minor toward a containment of saint veneration within the physical and temporal boundaries of the church.[26]

Figure 49.3 The Quintanabureba sarcophagus with *Passio* scenes. Museo de Burgos, Burgos, Spain. Photo courtesy of Miguel Zález

This institutionalization of saint devotion converges with the evidence provided by three sermons of Augustine, bishop of Hippo, perhaps delivered at the beginning of the fifth century.[27] Augustine marks the occasion as the anniversary of the martyrdoms (*dies natales*: literally birthdays) of Perpetua and Felicitas, and provides the first known reference to an actual text of the *Passio* which was read in his basilica.[28] Augustine's homilies contain many of the traditions preserved by the medieval manuscripts of the *Passio*. There are, however, unexplained discrepancies which suggest that his text is not identical to the *Passio*. Details of Augustine's discussions and those found in two fifth-century sermons, now referred to as 'pseudo-Augustine,' conflict with what has been preserved as the *Passio* text.[29]

According to Pseudo-Augustine sermon 394, when Perpetua hands over her son, she quotes Rom. 8:35, 'Who will separate us from the love of Christ?' which is not found in the *Passio*. When describing Perpetua's first vision, the homilist has Felicitas accompanying Perpetua up the ladder to the heavenly garden, not Saturus, as in the *Passio*. The image they see, of a shepherd milking his sheep, differs from the extant *Passio*. According to Pseudo-Augustine, it is Perpetua and Felicitas who see 'a shepherd both young and old' showing them vessels of milk. In the *Passio*, however, Perpetua describes the shepherd as merely 'white-haired' (*canus*) and 'large' (*grandis*; 4.8). The paradoxical image of a simultaneously 'aged man with white hair and a youthful face' (12.3), an image evoking Rev. 1.13–14 and Dan. 7.9, appears later in the *Passio*, in the vision of Saturus. Two manuscripts have Saturninus as Perpetua's colleague instead of Saturus.[30] It seems that the traditions about who appeared in Perpetua's first vision are confused.

Rather than suggesting these ancient commentators made a 'mistake' in their references to a Perpetua tradition, the evidence suggests that the attribution of the visions was not a consistent tradition.[31] All the visions of heavenly ascents may have originally been assigned to Perpetua and Felicitas alone, since the day of commemoration bears their names. Felicitas may have become a problematic figure for the post-Constantinian church. A pregnant slave who seemingly wills the life-threatening premature delivery of her own child so that she too may win the crown of martyrdom may have been written out of the vision by later editors or scribes.[32] As Brent Shaw has argued, the *Acta* give Felicitas a plebiean husband, whom she publicly rejects (5.2–6.1), to mitigate the scandal of her circumstances (Shaw 1993: 33–42).

In its final form, The *Passio of Perpetua and Felicitas* consists of three narrative layers. The middle core claims to be the original account of the martyr Perpetua herself, just as written by her hand and from her point of view: sicut conscriptum manu sua et suo sensu (*Passio* 2.3). This core relates the events from the arrest of Perpetua and her companions up to the day of her martyrdom, including the visions or dreams she has during this time. An editorial framework surrounds this core, which introduces the prison section, then continues the account of Perpetua's martyrdom from where she left off as well as that of her companions (presented as the editor's eyewitness account), and concludes with a doxological exhortation. An anomalous insertion after Perpetua's diary claims to be Saturus' account of his prison vision; as we have seen above, this dream, or some form of it, might well have been originally attributed to Perpetua herself. The differences in style and theme between this vision and those of Perpetua within the prison narrative may suggest, though, that the vision has undergone significant revision in the process of re-assignment.

The identity of the editor remains obscure as does his or her religious perspective, which we shall consider further later. The more interesting question, from the perspective of women's authorship and self-representation in antiquity, is whether Perpetua actually wrote the prison section of the *Passio*.

Writing something in someone else's name is a widespread practice in the ancient world, whether understood as intentional fraud or pious fiction. Tertullian himself denounces an anonymous presbyter in Asia Minor whom, he says, forged the story of *Paul and Thecla*, although he concedes that the presbyter claimed to do so out of love for Paul.[33] (Whether Tertullian is here correct is irrelevant for present purposes—*De baptismo* 17.5.) Further, the editor's claim, that Perpetua wrote it in her own hand, does not insure its authenticity for the modern scholar. The same assertion occurs, for instance,

not only in several undisputed letters of Paul (1 Cor. 16.21; Gal. 6:11; Phlm 19) but in letters now thought to be pseudonymous (Col. 4.18; 2 Thess. 3.17, where the author's insistence on this point seems particularly telling).

Thomas Heffernan has critiqued the characterization of the prison narrative as a diary, the term regularly used by recent scholarship, and questioned the authenticity of Perpetua's section on philological grounds.[34] Heffernan argues that the prison narrative is a combination of genres, drawing from the epistolary, peripatetic, and consolation literature along with *hypomnemata*, a catch-all genre which encompassed many types of nonrhetorical writing, including 'memoir, memorandum, note, diary, or commentary on an author' (Heffernan 1995: 321, 2012: 4). Perpetua's dreams in particular, he argues, reflect a new emphasis on self-revelation emerging in the late second century.[35] Heffernan points out that the text violates an essential aspect of the diary form: it provides 'deliberate temporal continuity . . . [using] such expressions as "after a few days", or "many days", "a few hours later", to indicate the passage of time and to introduce a new narrative sequence' (Heffernan 1995: 322). Furthermore, he notes, the grammar lacks an additional feature typical of diary writing: the verbs are mainly not conjugated in the present tense. Although he believes the account to be a first-person narrative, Heffernan entertains the possibility that the prison narrative was 'first dictated, copied by a scribe, and then conflated by the Christian redactor.'[36]

Contemporary claims about the authenticity of the prison narrative often appeal to the controversial notion of a female rhetoric.[37] Emotional, personal, fragmented, and colloquial, the style of Perpetua's account is thought to prove the trustworthiness of the editor's claim. However, we are less confident that this style can be identified specifically with Perpetua herself and consider just as likely the possibility that this style is purposefully constructed by an ancient author to appear as a (female) martyr's diary.

The essentialist claim that women in antiquity wrote in a distinctive and detectable form and voice collapses in view of ancient sources. Pliny the Younger, for instance, writes about:

> [s]ome letters which he [Pliny's friend, Pompeius Saturninus] said were written by his wife, but sounded to me [Pliny] like Plautus or Terence being read in prose. Whether they are really his wife's, as he says, or his own (which he denies) one can only admire him either for what he writes, or the way he has cultivated and refined the taste of the girl he married.
>
> *(Pliny* Ep. *1.16.6, in Fantham* et al. *1994: 349)*

Pliny's identification of the style of the letters with that of Plautus and Terence, two male authors, leads him to conclude that either his friend's wife did not write them, or that she learned how to write in male rhetorical style from her husband. Implicit in Pliny's judgment may be a notion of a distinctive female writing style, to which these letters do not conform. Pliny ultimately concedes, despite his preconceptions, that a woman could be trained to write 'like a man.'

Furthermore, that a man could write like a woman, in a voice recognizable as female, is evident from the majority of ancient playwrights and novelists who devoted much of their work to constructing gendered representations not only of characters, but of their speeches and letters as well. In so doing, they appealed to assumptions about gendered language that may also be reflected in Pliny's remarks. Chariton, in his novel *Chaereas and Callirhoe* has Callirhoe write a letter, which he has, of course, composed himself. Chariton writes in the letter, 'this letter is written in my own hand' (Reardon 1989: 116). Likewise, Xenophon has Manto write a love letter in which she exclaims that she 'can no longer contain herself, improperly, perhaps for a girl' (Reardon 1989: 141). Additional evidence may be found in the intriguing but generally ignored pseudepigraphic correspondence allegedly between one Mary of Cassabola and Ignatius of Antioch (Kraemer 1991: 236–39). Both letters are clearly written by the same author, so either a woman has written in both male and female voices, or a man has done so. In either case, our dilemma is apparent, if its solution is not.

Thus, attempts to verify the authenticity of Perpetua's narrative on gendered stylistic grounds prove troubling.[38] Furthermore, the similarity of the section to other autobiographical narratives which are considered authentic but heavily edited and rewritten, such as Aelius Aristides' *The Sacred Tales*, should give us pause about identifying stylistic features as a sign of authenticity rather than as self-consciously constructed rhetorical devices. As Glen Bowersock has aptly stated, 'Whether Perpetua's words, in whatever language, allow us to hear an authentic and distinctive woman's voice . . . is much more doubtful. How would we tell?' (Bowersock 1995: 34).

Our skepticism about the diary's authorship draws further support from a comment made by Augustine in a refutation of Victor Vitensis' books about infant baptism.[39] Even considering the polemical edge designed to undercut his interlocutor's argument that Perpetua's ability to achieve her deceased brother's salvation renders infant baptism unnecessary, Augustine's characterization of the *Passio* text as 'not itself a canonical writing, whether she herself wrote it or whether anyone else wrote it,' is suggestive (*De natura et origine animae* 1.10.12; our translation). Without expressing a point of view, Augustine intimates that the authorship of the text is open to debate, raising the possibility that Perpetua did not write the account, yet his concerns pass unremarked through centuries of transmission.

Finally, the startling degree to which details of the *Passio* conform to the biblical citation of Joel 2:28–29/Acts 2:17–18 in the prologue, which is only extant in two manuscripts, contributes to our concerns. It is possible, indeed perhaps tempting, to read the *Passio* in its present form as a narrative dramatization of this citation, as it appears in here:

> For in the last [literally newest] days, says the Lord, I will pour out my spirit over all flesh and their sons and daughters will prophesy; and I will pour my spirit over my male servants and female servants (*servos et ancillas meas*) and the young shall see visions and the old shall dream dreams.
>
> *(Acts 1.4)*

Many elements of the *Passio* conform closely to the particulars of this prophecy. As the prologue makes clear, the events of the *Passio* take place in these newest days (1.1–3). The outpouring of the divine spirit over all flesh may be depicted in the catechumens as a whole, or even in the larger phenomenon of conversion to Christianity which they may represent, although admittedly, the *Passio* is not terribly specific on this point. Perpetua and probably Saturus demonstrate the prophesying daughters and sons. The extraordinary emphasis on Perpetua's role as a daughter, primarily through her relationship with her father, coheres exceedingly well with the characterization of the female prophets as daughters.

The precise citation of the biblical verses in the *Passio* does not correspond exactly to any other known ancient Latin translations of either Joel 2:28–29 or Acts 2:17–18. Where the Hebrew, Greek, and Vulgate all modify the sons, daughters, male servants, and female servants with the possessive 'your,' the *Passio* applies the third-person plural 'theirs' (*eorum*) to the sons and daughters, and lacks any possessive for the young visionaries and the old dreamers.[40] Applied to Perpetua, this adjective seems particularly apt. Born to pagan parents, she is 'their' daughter in at least two senses: she is not only of the gentiles, but the daughter of two living parents. Such a reading provides one way of making sense of the limited presence of her mother. The emphasis on Perpetua's noble birth and elite social status may also stem from the redactor's desire to characterize her as the daughter distinct from the female servants (*ancillae*).

While Acts 2:18 predicts that the servants will also prophesy, Joel limits this activity to the sons and daughters, as does the citation in the *Passio*. And not surprisingly, none of the slaves' prophesy. They seem only to receive the spirit, most notably perhaps in the response to their prayers for Felicitas' early delivery, and probably also in their baptism. Their very presence in the story enhances the conformity of the *Passio* to the biblical verses. Interestingly, apart from her description as the *conserva* of Revocatus, there is no reason to think that Felicitas is a slave.[41] Yet the characterization

of Felicitas and Revocatus as *conservi*, construed as co-slaves, enhances the conformity of the *Passio* to the prophecy, which requires examples of slaves who receive the spirit, if not also who prophesy.

At several points, the redactor emphasizes both the youth of the catechumens as a whole, and that of Perpetua in particular. They are described as *adolescentes* (2.1), while she is twenty-two (2.3) and still called *puella* (20.1–2). The attention to her age and the emphasis on her visions coheres with the prediction of the young seeing visions. While the cultivation of visionary experience seems to have characterized much of North African Christianity, leading some scholars to posit a Montanist origin for the *Passio*, one might wonder whether the correspondence results from an existing tradition about Perpetua, or from the prophecy itself.[42]

Admittedly, several components of the biblical prophecy, as quoted in the *Passio*, are less apparent, including the pouring out of the divine spirit 'over all flesh,' the prophesying sons and the aged dreamers. The awkward integration of the figure and vision of Saturus into the text, which we noted earlier, may represent an attempt to offer an example of the prophesying son. It may also supply the old dreaming dreams, since his age is not specified, and he is not among the adolescent catechumens, but is rather their teacher, and therefore presumably somewhat older. Alternatively, the author of the *Passio* may find it sufficient to demonstrate partial fulfillment of the biblical text. In any case, the collective prophecies, visions, and reception of the divine spirit in the *Passio* clearly constitute fulfillment of this particular phrasing of ancient divine prophecy.

Thus, yet another explanation for the formation of the *Passio* is that its original core is an account of the imprisonment and visions of a martyr, Perpetua, with or without Felicitas, and that many of the additions function, intentionally, to demonstrate the fulfillment of the prophecy. If this reading has merit, it points to an author who looks for the fulfillment of biblical prophecies in the details of historical experience. Our discussion of the probable history of the traditions about Perpetua, and of the *Passio* itself, suggest that it is unlikely the entire martyrdom of Perpetua is generated out of the biblical passage(s), but it seems quite possible that both the general outline and many of the details of the prison narrative and the remaining sections are shaped to conform to the biblical text.[43]

In consideration of the myriad challenges the *Passio* poses to historical claims about the martyrdom of Perpetua, and the serious questions raised about the authenticity of the prison section, we consider it impossible to identify the original source of this martyrdom account. At some level, the account may reflect the experience of a young Carthaginian woman, an elite Roman matron, who was possibly executed for her adherence to Christianity, yet historical certainty is simply unattainable. While recent scholarship generally considers the prison account of Perpetua to be authentic and accurate, and the *Passio* as a whole to be a reasonably trustworthy representation of the martyrdom of Perpetua, Felicitas, and their male associates, it is our assessment that the hagiographic tradition may not be historically reliable to a sufficient degree to permit a profile of Perpetua and Felicitas comparable to what may be possible for other persons in the current section of this volume. Rather, what we may have is a 'representation' whose correspondence to actual persons and events cannot be determined. Nevertheless, if we assume for the sake of discussion that a sufficient amount of the *Passio* is rooted in actual historical events, we may explore a number of questions pertinent to a profile of the two women. The remainder of this chapter will endeavor to do just this.

Perpetua and Felicitas: a provisional profile

As we noted at the outset, the *Passio* as a whole is not much interested in the lives of these martyrs prior to their conversion to Christianity and their consequent arrest. In this regard, it appears to differ markedly from the genre of Christian biographies, or Lives, itself modelled on Greco-Roman forms, that flourishes from the fourth century on.[44] While hagiographic interests shape the use of biographic details in those accounts, the Lives nevertheless typically relate not only birth, education, and familial relationships, but also offer extended examples of piety and self-abnegation.

Scholars have heavily mined the significant amount of apparent biographical data about Perpetua condensed into the brief lines of *Passio* 2.1–3. Perpetua was a member of an old established family of Roman citizens, the Vibii, well-documented in North Africa.[45] According to one family of Latin manuscripts (identified by the Greek letter gamma) and the only extant Greek manuscript, she came from a town called Thuburbo Minor west of Carthage.[46] Shaw concludes that 'she came, therefore, from a solid municipal family, no doubt of some local wealth and prestige,' and not from the senatorial elite, as claimed by other scholars (Shaw 1993: 11). Her choice to breastfeed her infant son rather than employ a wet nurse, however, challenges the text's portrait.[47]

The narrator claims that Perpetua was not only born into the *honestiores*, but was the recipient of a liberal education (*liberaliter instituta*) that would have included training in Latin grammar and rhetoric. Citing Ovid, Amat proposes that young women would also have been schooled in music and singing (Amat 1996: 193; Ovid *Ars Amatoria* 3.35). Because the vision attributed to Saturus depicts Perpetua addressing the quarreling church leaders in Greek, some scholars have argued that she was literate in Greek as well (Potter 2010: 321), but the skepticism of both Amat and Shaw on this point seems well-taken (Shaw 1993: 12, n. 34; Amat 1996: 193).

That the daughters of citizen families would have been formally educated is substantiated by numerous ancient sources.[48] If Perpetua is indeed the author of the prison narrative, she was obviously sufficiently well-educated to compose it, and to write it in her own hand. In that portion of the *Passio*, scholars have seen allusions to Latin literature that bolster these claims.[49] The description of Perpetua as *liberaliter instituta* functions to affirm the claim that she is the writer of the prison account: it is precisely what we might expect from an author who wished to 'authenticate' the representation of a woman writer.

The narrator informs readers that Perpetua was *matronaliter nupta*, a phrase that appears to indicate that by virtue of her marriage, Perpetua attained the status of *matrona* (Amat 1996: 193). As numerous commentators have observed, neither the narrative frame, nor the prison account, provides any information regarding the identity or whereabouts of Perpetua's husband. Since she is not described as a widow, many scholars have assumed that her husband opposed her conversion to Christianity, and that this opposition accounts for his absence throughout the *Passio*. Such an interpretation accords well with numerous other early Christian representations of the dynamics of women's conversion to Christianity, from the story in Justin Martyr of the unnamed woman whose acceptance of ascetic Christianity causes her husband to bring charges against her and her Christian teachers (*Second Apology* 2.4ff., Kraemer 2011: 46–54), to the numerous tales in the *Apocryphal Acts from Thecla* on (Kraemer 2011: 117–52, 2012). Conceivably, then, the absent (and here anonymous) husband may be understood as a standard type in early Christian conversion narratives whose opposition requires no explanation. But equally possible, however, the troublingly absent husband may be viewed as evidence for some historical core of the narrative, on the logic that his absence creates more problems than it solves, and is thus unlikely to be fictive.[50]

According to the narrator, Perpetua's parents are both still living, as are two brothers, one of whom is said to be a catechumen as well (*Passio* 2.2). She is herself twenty-two, and the mother of a son young enough to be still nursing, which would probably make him less than three years old. Assuming the boy to be her first child, or at least her first living child, this would accord well with a marriage at about age eighteen, consistent with other evidence for the age at first marriage for elite Roman women (Shaw 1987).

This portrait of Perpetua is generally consistent with that of the account attributed to the martyr herself, although not completely. The prison narrative itself mentions (but never names) the father, the mother, at least one brother, and the baby boy. Perpetua at one point entrusts her baby to the care of her mother and a brother, which suggests that he is not imprisoned, neither is there any particular reason to think he is also a Christian (*Passio* 3.8). The fate of the catechumen brother is less clear, since he is unnamed and the term 'brother,' which appears subsequently in the narrative, can refer to a fellow Christian as well as a biological sibling. Perpetua relates that 'her brother' told her to ask for

a vision about her fate (but not their fate; *Passio* 4.1), which she does. Coming to, Perpetua relates the vision of Saturus and the ladder to her 'brother.' Although the language of 4.10 suggests that this 'brother' is also a Christian, it is impossible to say whether the brother is with Perpetua in prison, or merely visiting. Perpetua's description of Dinocrates (the only member of her family to be named) as her brother 'in the flesh,' (7.5) may suggest that we should understand the unnamed brother in chapter 4 as simply another Christian.[51]

As many scholars have recently considered, the portrait of Perpetua's relationship with her father in the prison narrative is particularly fascinating. Of all Perpetua's familial relationships, this one receives the most extensive articulation. Perpetua's four visions are interwoven with four confrontations in which her father begs her to renounce her Christianity. The visions and the confrontations may well be interrelated: aspects of the father may be seen not only in the gray-haired old man milking sheep in the first vision, but in the enormous dragon in the same vision and the hideous Egyptian in the third vision, both of whose heads Perpetua steps on (4.7; 10.11; Lefkowitz 1976). By comparison, Perpetua's relationship with her mother receives short shrift. Only in 3.8 does Perpetua speak with her mother, concerning her anxiety for her infant son, and arrangements for his care. How Perpetua's mother felt about her conversion and impending martyrdom is never explicit. Nowhere does her mother implore her to desist, although in 5.3, Perpetua's father begs her to think of the pain her death will cause her mother. Shaw takes Perpetua's statement in 5.6 to mean that Perpetua's family in general opposed her Christianity, and thought her impending death appropriate punishment, but the words 'he [the father] alone of all my family would not rejoice to see me suffer,' (*solus de passione mea gauisurus non esset de toto genere meo*) could easily be construed to mean that Perpetua's other relatives would rejoice in her suffering because they knew that it would lead to her immediate glorification (Amat 1996: 31, 209). Whether this means that the mother and other relatives may have been Christians themselves, it seems at least that they sympathized with Perpetua's Christianity.

If the prison narrative is indeed autobiographical, it alludes to a complex father-daughter relationship common to the dynamics of elite citizen families, in which fathers lavished devotion and attention on their daughters, while the relationships of mothers and daughters were relatively minimal.[52] Imploring her to abandon her Christianity, Perpetua's father reminds her of how he favored her above all her brothers. Shaw, Perkins, and Cooper, in particular, have demonstrated the extent to which the interactions between father and daughter function as an apt expression of the Christian critique and inversion of Roman power relations.[53] They focus in particular on the exchange in chapter 5, where Perpetua's father calls her no longer *filia* (daughter) but *domina* (5.5), the feminine form of *dominus*, lord or master.[54] While Shaw (and many others) take these scenes to be more or less accurate, the utility of these interactions might suggest that their representation is a more deliberate artifice than might initially appear.

Virtually no biographical data is offered for Felicitas, who figures only in the narrative sections, and is never mentioned in the account attributed to Perpetua. All that we are told of her is that she was a slave, the *conserva*, or co-slave, of Revocatus,[55] and was many months pregnant at the time of her arrest. With Perpetua, she is described as *puella* (20.1) which may signify her relative youth. Nothing suggests that she and Perpetua had any relationship prior to their shared martyrdom, or at least to their conversion to Christianity. No visions are attributed to Felicitas, or any exercise of leadership or authority. Since, as we noted earlier, the fifth-century homily falsely attributed to Augustine has Felicitas, not Saturus, ascend the ladder to heaven with Perpetua, it may be that Felicitas' status as a slave lies behind eventual suppression of earlier traditions in which Felicitas fills a role subsequently appropriated by Saturus.[56] Interestingly, though, neither Augustine, Pseudo-Augustine, nor Quodvultdeus characterize Felicitas as enslaved, and we have already raised questions about the historicity of this claim.

What kind of Christian might Perpetua (and perhaps Felicitas) have been? The language of the prologue, with its citation of Joel 2:28–29/Acts 2:17–18, and its praise of new prophecies and visions, has long suggested an association with the Christian revivalist movement known as the

New Prophecy, or Montanism (see Chapter 43 in this volume). Originating in Phrygia (in ancient Asia Minor; modern Turkey) around the third quarter of the second century CE, the movement appears to have been founded by a male prophet named Montanus, and two women prophets named Priscilla and Maximilla. It attracted significant support not only in Asia Minor, but in North Africa at the end of the second century: Tertullian himself was a Montanist for a significant period of his life.[57] Characteristic of the movement was a resurgence of charismatic activity, including prophecy, leadership roles for women based on such activity, and heightened eschatological expectation. The New Prophecy encountered considerable opposition from proto-orthodox and orthodox Christians for centuries; Montanists were still targeted in legislation by Christian emperors well into the fifth century.[58] The story of Perpetua, therefore, might have been transmitted within Montanist circles. The omission of the prologue in other Latin manuscripts may reflect an orthodoxing process that continued in the production of the Acta.

Numerous elements of the *Passio* would be consistent with what we know of the New Prophecy. Among these are Saturus' own vision, the authority Perpetua exercises there, the visions reported in her own voice, and even the citation of Joel 2:28–29/Acts 2:17–18. Numerous scholars have remarked on the possible correlation between Perpetua's consumption of a eucharistic cheese-like substance in her first vision, and reports that the Montanists celebrated a eucharist of bread and cheese.[59]

Yet the Montanist character of the *Passio* is not without problems. Nothing in the text is unambiguously Montanist. Precisely, the elements often adduced as indicators of Montanism, including an emphasis on prophecy and heightened eschatological interest, appear typical of North African Christianity in this period. So, too, the interpretation of dreams as divine revelations and an emphasis on their power, particularly for confessors (those prisoners willing to be martyred), appears to have been commonplace.[60] Cyprian describes his own actions as 'prompted by the Holy Spirit and counselled by the Lord through many explicit visions' (Cyprian, *Ep*. 57.5.1). He equates visions and revelations, and maintains their power to predict the future (Cyprian, *Ep*. 11.4.1–5.1). Furthermore, Maureen Tilley offers strong arguments that 'the Passion lacks the central and distinctive attributes of Montanist literature,' namely asceticism, millennarianism, and ecstatic prophecies (Tilley 1994: 835).

The question of martyrdom is particularly troublesome. Opponents of the New Prophecy accused its members of avoiding martyrdom, which, if true, would certainly weaken the identification of the *Passio* as Montanist. On the other hand, if members of the New Prophecy wished to represent themselves as exemplary martyrs, the *Passio* would certainly constitute an effective means of doing so.

Although one of us has earlier analyzed Perpetua and the *Passio* from the vantage point of Montanism, it seems wise to conclude that the matter cannot be resolved with any certainty (Kraemer 1992: 157–73). It is certainly possible that whoever composed the prologue was indeed a Montanist, and even intended both the quotation of Joel 2:28–29/Acts 2:17–18 and the defense of contemporary prophecy to signal this identity. Such an author may also have understood Perpetua to have been a member of the movement, as evidenced in particular by her consumption of the eucharistic cheese in her vision. If the visions are authentic, Perpetua may indeed have been a member of the New Prophecy. Were this to be the case, it might account for a puzzling aspect of the *Passio* that has never been adequately explained, namely why only a small group of catechumens were arrested, while other Christians, including the deacons Pomponius and Tertius, apparently came and went unhindered and unconcerned that they, too, might be arrested and condemned. Perhaps Perpetua and her companions were adherents of the New Prophecy, whose affiliation targeted them, but not other Christians, for prosecution.

Certain specific Christian characteristics may be deduced from the prison portion alone, although these are not without problems. Manifestly obvious is the emphasis on martyrdom, while less remarked is a noteworthy absence of miracles suspending the natural order, common to other second- and third-century Christian literature such as the Apocryphal Acts. Martyrdom appears to guarantee immediate entrance to heaven, consistent with a view Tertullian himself attests. Although this understanding is clearer in the vision of Saturus, it is also discernible in Perpetua's first vision, where she and Saturus ascend the ladder to heaven and are welcomed by the aged shepherd and

the saints, a vision that as many scholars have observed, appears grounded in the predictions of Revelation (e.g., 7:9–17). Implicit in this dream may be precisely the belief that Christians who die ordinary deaths cannot ascend into heaven until the second coming.

The prison portion affords little insight into authoritative and organizational church structures. The only church leaders mentioned are the two male deacons, unless perhaps we include the reference to Saturus as a teacher. No women leaders appear, neither do any male presbyters or bishops. Nevertheless, Perpetua's effective prayers for the salvation of her brother, Dinocrates, have led at least one scholar to suggest that she effectively held the rank of presbyter (Klawiter 1980). In this period, Christians awaiting martyrdom (confessors) were thought to have great powers, a perception expressed in the prison account at 4.1 and 9.1.[61] Among these powers was the ability to forgive those who had denied their faith under pressure. Since this power was otherwise reserved for bishops and presbyters, the ability of confessors such as Perpetua to effect the forgiveness of others apparently entitled them to the equivalent ecclesiastical rank. Klawiter points out that since women as well as men were arrested in anticipation of martyrdom, the assignment of ministerial rank to confessors had the potential to enable women to attain offices otherwise prohibited.[62]

Apart from her intercession for Dinocrates, Perpetua exercises no leadership within the prison account. In the separate vision of Saturus, Perpetua finds herself mediating a dispute between a presbyter and a bishop said to be those of her own church (although one might suspect that the presence of these officials represents a deliberate attempt to respond to the absence of such authorities in the prison narrative). In the narration of the martyrdom itself, Perpetua twice intervened effectively with the Roman tribune, once to secure better treatment for the prisoners, and once to prevent them from having to dress up as priests of Saturn and priestesses of Cybele in the arena (16.2–4; 18:4–6).

Conclusion

Seen through the multiple prismatic lenses supplied by the accumulated layers of the *Passio*, a fuller version of Perpetua's Christianity becomes visible, although whether it says more about the subsequent redactors than about any historical Perpetua remains an important question. The *Passio* as a whole attests to a Christianity steeped in the cosmic framework of the *Apocalypse of John*, enamored of martyrdom, apparently positioned at the end of time (although the language of the prologue seems ambivalent on this point when it predicts that 'these [new manifestations] will one day become ancient and needful for the ages to come').

By the fourth century, Perpetua's fame had spread well beyond Carthage. Her image as martyred mother, unlike the Maccabean mother who exhorted her sons to martyrdom (2 Macc. 7.5, 29; 4 Macc. 15.12), uniquely exemplified the choice between the Roman family and the family of Christ, which was only paralleled in accounts of female asceticism. Whereas sexual abstinence had forced a wedge between Christian wives and non-Christian husbands, Perpetua's faith required her to give up her human father and son in exchange for a divine father and son (Tilley 1994: 839–40). The *Passio* shows how the conflict between Roman civic authority, reflected in the institution of the *domus* as a microcosm, and the church can be resolved in self-sacrifice or death. As this political struggle dissipated, the story of Perpetua's martyrdom came to represent the rejection of whatever interpreters deemed to be less worthy. For these Latin interpreters, the choice of martyrdom modelled obedience to Christian values.

In the fifth century, the remains of Perpetua and Felicitas were believed to be located in the main Basilica of Carthage, attested by both inscriptions and the comments of Victor Vitensis. Early sixth-century mosaics commemorate the martyrs in the Archiepiscopal Chapel of Ravenna, the basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, and the Eufrasiana Basilica in Porec (Croatia). These monuments suggest that independent of the historical details of Perpetua's death, her martyrdom was a powerful symbol and her story continued to be read, translated, edited, and interpreted by Christians in the east as well as in the west, as can be seen in Figure 43.5 of this volume—a photograph of a contemporary icon of Saints Perpetua and Felicity.[63]

Notes

1 Perpetua receives some notice in the writings of Tertullian: as discussed below, it is unclear whether Tertullian knows the text of the martyrdom or some other version, oral or written, but in any case, he does not provide independent attestation of the life of either woman.

2 The later martyrdom account, *Acta Brevia Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, is derived from the *Passio* and heavily edited to conform to late antique Christian sensibilities; it is, therefore, not helpful for historical reconstruction.

3 *Passio* 2.3. Except where noted, all citations of the text follow the edition of Heffernan (2012), whose critical apparatus is more comprehensive than that of Amat (1996). English translations are generally our own. The standard English translation is that of Musurillo 1972: 106–31 (reproduced in Kraemer 1988: 96–107 and Kraemer 2004: 356–68), yet Heffernan's work will undoubtedly supersede it.

4 Kraemer (1991); Rader (1981); Snyder (1989); Heffernan (2012).

5 E.g., Burrus (2008); Bremmer and Formisano (2012); Castelli (2004); Cooper (2011); Von Franz (1980 [1949]); Kitzler (2015); Kraemer (1992); Maitland (1996); Miles (1989); Moss (2013, 2012, 2010); Perkins (2007, 1995); Rader (1981); Salisbury (1997); Shaw (2004, 1993); Streete (2009); Tilley (1994); Williams (2012).

6 Neo-traditional: Barnes (2010); New: Moss (2013).

7 Kraemer (2004: 5–6, 356–7; 2011: 244). While pseudepigraphy was common among Jews and Christians, the practice was otherwise rare, as Bart Ehrmann has recently shown (2011, 2013).

8 Amat thinks the text is ambiguous on this point: 'One of the two [brothers] is also a catechumen, the redactor tells us, but without specifying whether he was arrested or not' (1996: 31, our translation from the French).

9 Heffernan (2012: 165); Cooper (2011: 688–90).

10 The phrase *ite et ludite* (12.6) is ambiguous and unparalleled in Latin literature. For some discussion of the use of ludite here, see Amat (1996: 238); Heffernan (2012: 290).

11 Text and French translation in Amat (1996). Although scholars have followed Van Beek's original designation of this text as Acta, the manuscripts employ the title *Passio* (Kitzler 2015: 99).

12 Amat (1996: 66); Barnes (1968: 521); Bremmer (2003: 57–8); Dronke (1984: 1); Fridh (1968: 80–3), who maintains the original of the Saturus vision was Greek; Heffernan (2012: 61); Kitzler (2015: 26); Shaw (2004).

13 Robeck (1992: 13); Barnes (1968b: 523–5); Shaw (1993: 3). A sixth century inscription from Mçidfa's basilica maiorum gives the March 7 date (CIL VIII.4, 25038), conforming to the Roman calendar.

14 We use the term 'persecution' throughout this essay, fully aware that we are replicating a Christian perspective of Roman treatment of Christians in the early centuries. The term 'prosecution' replicates the Roman view. As Geoffrey de Ste. Croix argued in 1963, and Candida Moss has more recently maintained (2013), the idea that Christians were systematically targeted by the Roman administration is a Christian fiction.

15 Barnes (1968b: 522–3); Frend (1993: 87); Dronke (1984: 1); Amat (1997: 20–1); LeClercq (1939: 421); Van Beek (1938: 3).

16 Barnes (1968a: 40–1). For the opposite perspective, see Frend (1975).

17 That Perpetua is not presented as having been killed in a wave of systematic persecution supports an earlier date, before the mid third century, since the later persecutions were widespread.

18 Latin text per Amat (1996). Heffernan's text reads 'Christianus es.'

19 The editor of the *Passio* relates that the guard had received 'warnings from false witnesses (*homines vanissimores*)' about the prisoners (16.2), like Pliny's complaint that 'others who were named by the informer said that they were Christians and then denied it, explaining that they had been, but had ceased to be such, some three years ago' (*Ep*. 10.96, trans. H. M. Gwatkin in Stevenson 1987: 19).

20 Other martyr traditions present alternative dynamics of persecution. For example, the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* presents the martyrdom of these six women and six men as essentially voluntary and initiated by the martyrs themselves. The proconsul Saturninus entreats the Christians to 'return to their senses [so that they might] obtain the pardon of our lord the emperor' (*Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* 2; tr. Musurillo 1972: 87). Although Perpetua is not portrayed as an eager volunteer for martyrdom, the vague description of her arrest leaves open the possibility that she, like her predecessors, came forward to publicly bear witness.

21 Roman prosopographies do not link the praenomen 'Minucius' with the nomen 'Timinianus': see Harris and Gifford (1890: 9). Hilarianus is also a common name for North African procurators. Only one version of the *Passio* contains the name Geta (Heffernan 2012: 110; Amat 1996: 130), which is actually spelled in the manuscript with a 'C' instead of a 'G,' employing the archaic orthography for the velar plosive sound (before the voiced 'g' and voiceless 'k' sounds were distinguished by different letters). That this tradition is historically unreliable can be inferred from a note in the Latin historian Spartianus that Geta's birthday was in May, not February or March (Barnes 1968b: 523).

22 Amat (1999: 301–7); Aronen (1984: 67–76); Franchi de'Cavalieri (1962 [1896]: 199–262); Kitzler (2015: 66–9; Lomanto (1975: 566–86).

23 Thurston and Attwater (1956: I, 493). Barnes' attempt to verify the authenticity of the eyewitness account of the *Passio* relies solely on Roman dates for Geta's birth. He never considers the lack of textual evidence for the Geta reference itself, or the problems of competing dates in other calendars and versions (1968b: 521–5). Heffernan does evaluate these concerns, leading him to 'cautiously' suggest that the reference was added by the redactor for 'historical verisimilitude' (2012: 76–7). Not long after their appearance in the Roman calendar, the martyrs are listed in the Syriac martyrology.

24 BHG 1566, discussed in Kitzler (2015: 77).

25 Kitzler (2015: 76); Perraymond (1989: 560–3); Schlunk (1965: 139–66). There may also be a mid fourth-century fresco in the Roman Domitilla Catacomb depicting Perpetua's ladder vision, although its interpretation is debated due to its fragmentary state (Kitzler 2015: 76; Wilpert 1903: 485–6).

26 Conc. Hippon. A. 393: 5, canon 36 = Reg. Eccl. Carthag. Excerpt. *c.* 46 (CCL 149: 43, 186): De passionibus martyrum. Liceat etiam legi passiones martyrum, cum anniversarii dies eorum celebrantur (see also canon 5 of the original record in CCL 149: 21: Ab universis episcopis dictum est: Omnibus placet ut scripturae canonicae quae lectae sunt, sed et passiones martyrum, sui cuiusque locis, in ecclesiis praedicentur); Concilium Carthagensis, III. 47, quoted in Delehaye (1912: 423 n. 3): Ut praeter scripturas canonicas nihil in ecclesia legatur sub nomine divinarum scriptarum . . . Liceat etiam legi passiones martyrum quum anniversarii dies eorum celebrantur.

27 Augustine, *Sermons* 280–2, and the recently-published *Sermon* 282 *auct.* 3 = Erfurt 1, which is a more complete version of Sermon 282 (Schiller *et al.* 2008: 260–4). Dating follows Hill (1994: 76, 80, 82). Other references to Perpetua appear in *Sermon* 159A, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 47.13, and the treatise *De natura et origine animae* 1.10.12–11.13; 2.10.14–12.16; 3.9.12; 3.13.19; 4.18.26–7. The first two appearances are perfunctory and offer no basis for textual comparison. In *De natura*, however, the correspondence between Augustine and the *Passio's* description of Perpetua's second and fourth visions align.

28 Augustine, *Sermo* 280.1. Since the moment of death was equivalent to second baptism, or rebirth into the Spirit, these days were called *dies natalis*. The custom of referring to the acts of saints and martyrs as *gesta* makes more explicit the parallel between the Christian commemorations and the Roman celebration of the Emperors' birthdays. In his commentary on Psalms, Augustine cites the text as *The Passion of Blessed Perpetua* which 'we know and read' (Enarrationes in Psalmos 47.13).

29 Pseudo-Augustine, *Sermons* 394 and 394A. See Amat (1996: 271). One sermon is tentatively identified by Shewring as authentic Augustine, yet he admits 'Whether it may in fact be genuine I lack the competence to say' (1931: xxix).

30 Heffernan (2012: 107).

31 Braun (1979: 105); Frend (1965: 363, 365); Fridh (1968: 9–10); Harris and Gifford (1890: 8). It is implausible to suggest that Augustine and pseudo-Augustine could have made a mistake in their sermons just after the text had been read aloud before their congregations. Kitzler attributes the discrepancies to Augustine's strenuous efforts to domesticate the unsettling elements of the *Passio* (2015: 86–91), but this does not account for all the inconsistencies.

32 Augustine, Sermo 281.3, ET in Hill. Subsequent quotations for Augustine's sermons are from this translation.

33 For an ET of the *Acts of (Paul and) Thecla*, see Kraemer (2004: 299–308); for a feminist commentary with helpful bibliography, see McGinn (1994). See also Kraemer (2011: 118–20).

34 Heffernan (1995: 315–25; 2012: 4–5), citing its oral quality; Habermehl (1992: 241–8), who raises concerns but ultimately does not resolve the question of the authenticity of the diary.

35 David Konstan explores the formal and thematic parallels to romantic novels (2012).

36 Heffernan (2012: 83), a revision of his view in 1995: 323–4.

37 Dronke (1984: 1–17); Petroff (1986: 63); Shaw (1992: 19).

38 See, e.g., Shaw (1993), Dronke (1984) and Petroff (1986), all of whom argue for a distinctive female style.

39 Kenneth Steinhauser argues that Vincentius was Montanist, rather than Pelagian, as is generally assumed (1997: 245–9).

40 Interestingly, the possessive *eorum* does occur in Tertullian's citation of these verses, which itself differs from other ancient attestations: in novissimis temporibus effundam de Spiritu meo in omnem carnem et prophetabunt filii filiae que eorum et super servos et ancillas meas de meo Spiritus (sic?) effundam (Adversus Marcionem 5.8).

41 For the thesis that she was not, see Poirier (1970). Neither Augustine nor Ps. Augustine nor Quodvultdeus describes Felicitas as a slave.

42 Survey of the literature can be found in Butler (2006: 2–6). Although recent scholarship notes that Montanists comprised one of the many varieties within the Christian congregations of Carthage, and that their heretical status is a later development, Tabbernee suggests that opposition to the movement may have emerged in early third-century Carthage (2009: 63–5). Heffernan argues that the prologue frames the *Passio* as a defense of the New Prophecy, whose status had already come under attack at the beginning of the third century in Rome (Heffernan 2012: 11).

43 In a manner not unlike that which Kugel (1990) argues for the rabbinic Joseph traditions, and Kraemer (1998) explores with regard to the Greek tales of Joseph and Aseneth.
44 Examples of women's lives include the *Life of Macrina*; the *Life of Melania the Younger*; and the *Life of Olympias*.
45 See Shaw (1993: 10–11), for more detailed discussion of the issues such as the antiquity of the Vibii, whether or not they were of Senatorial status, and so forth.
46 See again Shaw (1993: 10, esp. note 28) for details; see also critical apparatus to 2.1 in Amat (1996: 104), and her commentary (192–3).
47 Cooper (2011: 198); Moss (2012: 131). Although see Sigismund-Nielsen's proposal that this was local custom (2012: 108) and Heffernan's suggestion that Perpetua's imprisonment terminated her wet nurse's services (2012: 205).
48 Snyder (1989); Kraemer (1991); Harris (1989); Hallett (1999).
49 Shaw (1993: 12), citing Harris (1989) and Dronke (1984: 107–11).
50 See Cooper's argument that Perpetua's marital status was added by a later editor to overcome the embarrassment of her illegitimate child (2011: 198–9).
51 Amat (1996: 32; 200), where she asks whether the frater is here Saturus, presumably because it is Saturus who appears in the requested vision. In 5.3, Perpetua's father implores her to think of her brothers (aspice fratres tuos) who will be devastated by her death. Were it not for the claim of the narrator that one of her brothers was a catechumen as well, we might read this to suggest that however many brothers she had were not Christians, any more than her mother, aunt, or father were Christians.
52 On which, see Hallett (1984); Kraemer (1993).
53 Shaw (1993); Perkins (1995); Cooper (2011).
54 In 4.1, the 'brother' also addresses Perpetua as *domina soror*.
55 See Amat (1996: 193) for brief treatment of the possibility that conserva designates a spouse.
56 But see also the possibility discussed above that a desire to conform to the biblical citation of Joel 2:28–29/ Acts 2:17–18 also affects the representation of Felicitas.
57 The chronology of Tertullian's life, including his period as a Montanist, is quite complex: for discussion, see Barnes (1971).
58 E.g., *C.Th.* 16.5.59 (from 423) and various others. Ancient evidence is collected in Heine (1989); Tabbernee (1997). For a recent treatment, see Trevett (1996); for briefer overviews of the movement, particularly with reference to women, see Kraemer (1992: 157–73); Elm (1994). One might speculate that the preface, which is preserved in only one Latin manuscript and the Greek, reflects a Montanist framing of the *Passio*.
59 Epiphanius, Panarion 49.2; Kraemer (1992: 163–5).
60 An important study on this topic is Robeck (1992). Cf. Tabbernee (1997: 56–7).
61 According to Tertullian, Christians visited confessors to ask for intercessions of various sorts: adulterers and 'fornicators' flocked to those imprisoned to ask for absolution, bring with them food and drink for the martyrs, reminiscent of *Passio* 9.1; *De pudicitia* 22.1.
62 For further discussion of this, and of women's leadership in early Christian churches, see Kraemer (1992: 174–98, esp. 179–81); Cardman (1999).
63 Perpetua is even listed on the Syriac calendar, yet her co-martyr there is Saturnilus ('l' and 'n' are easily confused in Syriac), not Felicitas (W. Wright in Robinson [1891: 23]).

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50
CONSTANTINE

Bill Leadbetter

Introduction

Constantine remains a figure of controversy. He is one of those people who seem by their personality, their acumen and their ability both to take the opportunities offered and to leave the world markedly changed by their presence in it. He has bequeathed a series of paradoxes: an autocrat who never ruled alone; a firm legislator for the Roman family, yet who slew his wife and eldest son and was perhaps, himself, illegitimate; a dynastic puppet-master, who left no clear successor; a soldier whose legacy was far more spiritual than temporal.

Constantine's origins

His origins lay within the ruling Roman military caste. By the late third century, the traditional Roman landed aristocracy had given way to a new class of men distinguished by their military merits. Constantine's father, Constantius, was one such. Of Pannonian origin (Aurelius Victor, *De Caesaribus* 39.26), he followed a career within the senior echelons of the army. At some point during Constantius' rise through the senior ranks he acquired Helena, a concubine of humble origins (Leadbetter 1998b). In about 272, their son Constantine was born in the Pannonian town of Naissus, the modern Niš, in southern Serbia (Barnes 1982: 39–42).

The Dyarchy and the Tetrarchy

In November 284, the guard captain, Valerius Diocles, was proclaimed emperor. Taking the name Diocletian, he sealed his usurpation with victory in the field over Carinus, his rival, in the following year. Diocletian's accession to unchallenged power marked a change in the way in which the Roman world was ruled. Beset by pressure on the frontiers, separatist revolt and the pressing need for administrative change, he appointed a deputy with whom he formally shared power, thus creating a 'Dyarchy' ('rule by two'). The person whom he appointed, Maximian, was another Pannonian military man (*Epitome de Caesaribus* 40.10). Diocletian was careful to preserve both the trappings and the reality of seniority (Leadbetter 1998c), but the junior emperor was still a formidable figure.

A cryptic passage in a panegyric to Maximian, delivered in 289, has led many scholars to accept that, by that time Constantius was Maximian's Praetorian Prefect (Barnes 1982: 37, 125 f.; Nixon and Rodgers 1994: 70 f.; Leadbetter 1998b: 75–77). The passage (*Panegyrici Latini* 10 [2] 11.4)

celebrates a marriage, in all likelihood the marriage of Constantius and Maximian's daughter, Theodora. At this point, then, Constantius put his concubine aside for the sake of a highly advantageous dynastic match.

In 293, Diocletian expanded the imperial college still further. While he and Maximian retained their ranks as emperors of more senior status (*Augusti*), two deputies, each with the title of 'most noble (*nobilissimus*) Caesar', were appointed. This arrangement is referred to by modern scholars as the 'Tetrarchy' ('rule by four') and was commemorated in imperial statuary (see Chapter 10 and Figures 10.1 and 10.2 in this volume). Diocletian's deputy was his own son-in-law, Galerius. Maximian's was Constantius. The principal task for the Caesars was to assert imperial authority on the frontiers and win back separatist regions. As generals, they were extremely successful. Constantius recaptured Britain from the separatist emperor, Allectus; Galerius shattered the power of Rome's ancient enemy, Persia.

Constantine's early career

Like his father, Constantine pursued a military career. He was assisted by his father's rank, but all of his early military service was in the armies of Galerius and Diocletian (Barnes 1982: 41 f.). While it is legitimate to conjecture that he was hostage for his father's loyalty during this period, he was also an active and valiant warrior. He was in the army of Galerius which invaded Persia, and fought with distinction against Sarmatian bands on the Danube frontier. Soon afterwards, he was transferred to Diocletian's personal staff, where he served until 305.

Figure 50.1 Head of Constantine from the Basilica of Constantine in Rome. Photo J. C. N. Coulston

In May 305, Diocletian and Maximian abdicated. Diocletian's abdication was voluntary (although it followed upon a long illness); Maximian was less willing, but he complied with his senior colleague's wishes. Both retired to country houses and were succeeded by their deputies: Constantius replaced Maximian and Galerius took the place of Diocletian. Constantius, however, was the senior of the two, and his name appears first in inscriptions of the period. One source suggests that it was expected that the new Caesars would be Constantine and Maxentius, the son of Maximian (Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* 18.8). Instead, they were Maximin Daia and Severus, both men loyal to Galerius.

Galerius had benefited immensely from the transfer of power. While he could not inherit Diocletian's formal seniority, he sought to exercise Diocletian's station (Leadbetter 2009: 156–167). Constantius, for his part, seems to have accepted the situation. It may be that he had no desire to risk open conflict with Galerius; it may be that he was mindful Constantine was now posted to the court of Galerius. Constantius certainly sent to Galerius, asking that his son be returned to him (Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* 23.3–4; *Origo Constantini imperatoris* 2.2.). Galerius, unable to decline such a request, acceded, and Constantine returned to his father's side in time to accompany him on campaign against the Picts (*Panegyrici Latini* 6 [7] 7.5). On 25 July 306, however, Constantius died and Constantine was proclaimed emperor by the troops in York (for the dates, see Barnes 1982: 61).

Constantine the politician

Constantine did not immediately set himself up as a rival to Galerius. Rather, he sought Galerius' recognition. His opportunism was swiftly imitated. In late October 306, Maximian's son Maxentius, then resident in Rome, was proclaimed emperor by the remnants of the Praetorian Guard still resident there. He was careful to claim no title, striking coins instead as *princeps* rather than *Augustus* or *Caesar* (Cullhed 1994: 32–34). This did not suffice to appease Galerius, who might reward audacity when there was an imperial vacancy to fill, but could not countenance disloyalty otherwise. Severus, Constantius' successor in the west, marched against the rebel, who sat securely behind the walls of Rome. Maxentius called upon his father for aid. Maximian had commanded the troops now serving under Severus. He recalled them to their old loyalty and, deserted by his army, Severus fled to Ravenna, where he was handed over to Maximian, compelled to abdicate and then executed (Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* 26.6–11; *Origo Constantini Imperatoris* 3.6–4.10.). The vacancy which Maxentius required had been created, but not in any way calculated to endear him to Galerius. The senior emperor himself now marched on the rebel, but with only marginally more success. Galerius retired from Italy with his life and his army, but Maxentius still remained, unscathed, behind the walls of Rome.

Maxentius' successful revolt was a piece of extraordinary good fortune for Constantine. It reintroduced Maximian into the affairs of the empire, and robbed effective control of the west from Galerius, thus effectively leaving Constantine a free hand in his own lands. Constantine used his opportunity to cement his position through dynastic arrangements of his own. He had previously enjoyed a relationship with a concubine, Minervina, who had borne him a son, Crispus (*Epitome de Caesaribus* 41.4; Zosimus 2.20.2 and Zonaras 13.2.37 all call Minervina a concubine. There is no reason to dispute their testimony, although Jones *et al.* 1971: 602–603 suggest otherwise). This relationship was now put aside for a grand match.

As the armies of Galerius marched through Italy in 307, Constantine was marrying Maximian's daughter Fausta. An orator celebrated the occasion in a panegyric, which also noted a further development. Constantine had accepted promotion to the rank of Augustus from the hands of Maximian (*Panegyrici Latini* 7 [6] 5.3). Constantine's claim to the senior rank was attractive and plausible. He had been Caesar to the slain Severus, and his claim was recognized by Maximian, whose authority, at this point, was still considerable. This latter point was not lost on the panegyrist who made much of it.

Galerius, however, claimed the right to nominate Severus' successor. He nominated himself and the retired Diocletian as consuls for the following year (308) and summoned an imperial conference at Carnuntum in Pannonia. Diocletian's presence added due weight to its deliberations. Maximian was prevailed upon to return to private life; the two, together with Galerius nominated a new Augustus for the west, Licinius, an old friend and ally of Galerius (*Origo Constantini imperatoris* 5.13). Constantine was not rejected from this scheme; instead, he retained the insignia of Caesar.

This arrangement was hardly satisfactory to Constantine who did not attend the conference and ignored its decisions. He remained the effective ruler of Britain, Gaul and Spain, whereas his nominal superior, Licinius, controlled a patch of Pannonia, and had the task of recovering Italy and Africa from Maxentius. Constantine took his responsibilities seriously. When not engaged in high politics, he was on campaign (Barnes 1982: 70). In 310, Maximian, excluded from power by Maxentius and reduced to the pathetic status of vexatious supplicant, sought to depose Constantine. The coup was ludicrous; the aged Augustus, its only casualty, was forced into suicide. Constantine's condign treatment of his father-in-law illustrates the limits of his *pietas*. Another panegyric, delivered in Autun in 310, sets out the official version (Nixon and Rodgers 1996: 237–243).

The panegyrist of 310 was also entrusted to deploy a hitherto undisclosed fact about Constantine's family. In praising the emperor, he also praised his ancestry: not merely his father Constantius, but also a more remote antecedent: the emperor Claudius II Gothicus (r. 268–270), a hero of the Roman recovery, mythologized for the defeat of a Gothic horde and premature death from plague (*Panegyrici Latini* 6 [7] 2; Syme 1974; Nixon and Rodgers 1996: 219). Although the precise nature of Constantine's kinship with Claudius was never explained by the panegyrist, it is nevertheless clear that a new image was being crafted. Hitherto, Constantine had rested his claims to legitimacy upon both his recognition by Galerius and Constantine and his proclamation by Constantius' army in 306. He now set these narratives aside in favour of one more overtly dynastic. One reason for this change of strategy may well have lain with Galerius. The senior Augustus had already begun making plans for his retirement. A palatial villa was being constructed for him at Romuliana, the place of his birth (Srejovic *et al.* 1983; Srejovic 1985, 1992/3; Leadbetter 2009: 237–232). Lactantius states that he had already commenced amassing state resources for the celebration of his *vicennalia* (Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* 31.2). This year-long celebration of his accomplishment and longevity was due to commence in March 312 and conclude with his abdication twelve months later.

Constantine was probably therefore preparing the ground for his own claim to seniority within the empire. His anticipation was rewarded when Galerius died prematurely in May 311, granting a grudging toleration to the Christians on his deathbed (Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* 34–35; Leadbetter 2009: 223–225; Potter 2013: 134). No successor was proclaimed. Rather, Licinius and Maximinus partitioned the territories that he had occupied: Licinius took control of the Balkan provinces; Maximinus those of Asia Minor. The empire was again ruled by four emperors, but it was not a collegial arrangement. War between them was inevitable.

War with Maxentius

The historical image of Maxentius has largely been crafted by Constantine's propagandists. From them emerges a picture of a greedy, wanton and superstitious ruler. But Maxentius was never so wicked. He was a conscientious ruler who retained the loyalty of his troops. He tolerated Christianity, although he did exile two popes whose elections had occasioned disorder (Cullhed 1994: 72–73). Constantine, however, felt the need to blacken his memory, in all likelihood because the war which he waged against Maxentius was unprovoked.

In the summer of 312, Constantine invaded Italy. His army defeated a large force led by Maxentius' general, Pompeianus, at Verona, and then marched on Rome. Maxentius, sensitive to disloyalty, abandoned his earlier policy of sitting behind Rome's mighty walls and subverting his opponent's army. Instead, he marched out to confront Constantine. A recent discovery has thrown remarkable

new light on this event. In December 2006 archaeologists excavating on the Palatine discovered a blue-green orb-topped sceptre in a wooden box that may have belonged to Maxentius. If so, Maxentius either arranged for the sceptre to be buried on the Palatine before he left to confront Constantine or his followers buried it after his defeat.[1] The armies met in battle outside Rome on the northern side of the Milvian Bridge (see Figure 50.2) and Maxentius was defeated, drowning in the Tiber in the chaotic retreat to Rome.

In consequence of his victory at the Milvian Bridge, Rome, Italy and Africa were now Constantine's. Constantine's victory and subsequent triumphal entry into Rome were celebrated on the Arch of Constantine later erected in the city (see Figure 50.3).

Eusebius, in his *Life of Constantine* (composed soon after the emperor's death in 337), states that Constantine himself had told him that one afternoon before this battle while marching with his army he saw with his own eyes, as did all his army, a cross of light written in the sky, together with the words 'In this conquer'. The following night Christ appeared to him in a vision with the sign seen in the sky and told him to make a copy of it to serve as his standard in war. Next day, Constantine summoned his craftsmen and produced such a standard, consisting of a tall pole and a cross-bar, with the now familiar *chi-rho* monogram (symbolizing Jesus Christ, *chi* and *rho* being the first two letters of *Christos*) embellished with gold and jewels at the top of the pole, and a banner carrying the image of Constantine hanging from the cross-bar. Thus was created the famous *Labarum*. Constantine also had his soldiers paint the *chi-rho* monogram on their shields (Jones 1972: 98–101).

The conversion of Constantine

The question of the conversion of Constantine has continued to excite controversy. Its authenticity has been questioned and asserted with equal ferocity (e.g. Keresztes 1981; Kee 1982). More recently, historians have preferred to accept the authenticity of Constantine's conversion but see

Figure 50.2 The Milvian Bridge in Rome. Photo Philip F. Esler

it as a process rather than an event (e.g. Odahl 2004: 108–110; Potter 2013: 142–143). Whatever his private convictions, Constantine came to frame a religious policy that did more than merely tolerate Christianity.

Immediately following his defeat of Maxentius, Constantine confirmed his policy of toleration in an edict issued from Rome in which he ordered the cessation of persecution everywhere (Corcoran 1996: 187). This order was principally directed at Maximinus, who initially complied. Some months afterwards, Constantine met with Licinius in the city of Milan. There, the alliance between the two was sealed by the marriage of Licinius to Constantine's sister Constantia (Pohlsander 1993). They also produced a document, 'The Edict of Milan', which was enforced in the territory that they ruled directly. This granted universal toleration and the restitution of all Christian property.

Licinius' newfound acceptance of Christianity was one substantial policy difference which he had with Maximinus who had recommenced a persecution that he had been reluctant to abandon in the first place (Castritius 1969: 63–86; Mitchell 1988: 115; Nicholson 1994). Before the two armies of Maximinus and Licinius met in battle at Adrianople, that of Licinius recited a prayer to 'the supreme God', the words of which were (according to the emperor) dictated to him in a dream by an angel. The battle necessarily took on a religious dimension; Licinius, the champion of 'the supreme God' was challenging Maximinus, publically zealous for the traditional deities. In this religious trial by combat, Licinius was victorious and Maximinus fled to Tarsus where he died. Licinius was the master of the east; the last vestiges of persecution ceased; and the survivors of the families of both Diocletian and Galerius were eradicated (Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* 50–1).

Licinius' alliance with Constantine guaranteed peace for the Christians under his direct rule. His wife was Christian and places were found for bishops at his court (Pohlsander 1993: 156–157). The political relationship between the two was uneasy, however. A war broke out in 316 and Licinius was defeated, losing most of his European possessions to Constantine. It was only after this that Licinius revived a policy of hostility towards the Christians, perhaps fearing Christians as a fifth column for his rival. Licinius' anti-Christian measures became the substantive cause of the final war with Constantine, who was, no doubt, glad of the excuse which they provided for him (Barnes 1981: 72–73). In 324, Licinius was defeated and deposed by Constantine. The empire was now united under his authority. Persecution had gasped itself out and the Constantinian Church reigned triumphant.

Constantine and the Church

Introduction

When Constantine entered Rome in October 312, he brought with him an entirely new approach to Christianity. His predecessors had been hostile or ambivalent. He became an active patron and benefactor. In so doing, he was not careless of the sensitivities of those in the empire who were not Christians. Constantine was not a crass triumphalist. In the city of Rome itself, the only image of him that referred to the new faith was the great statue in the basilica in the Forum (see Figure 50.1). This statue depicted him holding the *Labarum*, his own symbol of Christianity, mentioned earlier. Otherwise, he expressed a dutiful traditionalism. The inscription on his triumphal arch in Rome refers coyly to 'the divinity' (*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* 694 = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 6. 1139). For five years or more after his victory at the Milvian Bridge his coinage retained traditional pagan images, such as Hercules the Victorious, Mars the Destroyer, Jupiter the Preserver and, above all, *Sol Invictus*, 'the Unconquered Sun' (Bruun 1966: 61–64; Jones 1972: 97;), which also features on his triumphal arch (see Figure 50.3).

These ought not to be taken as uncertainty in Constantine's own mind or policy but courtesy to the considerable numbers of people in the empire with traditional religious beliefs. Taken as a whole, Constantine's actions make his preference for Christianity perfectly clear. The tenor of his legislation

Figure 50.3 Relief of Constantine's triumphal entry into Rome, from the Arch of Constantine, showing Sol Invictus over the emperor and also in a chariot. Photo J. C. N. Coulston

makes this clear as do his patronage of the Church, which was on a vast scale, and his involvement in its internal disputes, particularly the Donatist and Arian schisms. Christians in turn made their own preference for Constantine clear. A new theology of empire emerged which exalted the Christian emperor, a development with which Constantine was pleased to co-operate.

Legislative acts

Constantine's patronage of Christianity became evident soon after his victory over Maxentius. There is evidence of imperial subsidy of the Church and the exemption of Christian clergy from civic duties as early as 313 (Eusebius, *H.E.* 10.6–7). Such acts of favour towards the Church reflect a determination by Constantine to legitimate its place in the wider community. Because Christian groups had hitherto been fringe or clandestine, the Church had no clear public role. Throughout his legislation, Constantine sought to provide this. The exemption of clergy from civic duties, already flagged in a letter to the governor of Africa, was made more explicit in later mandates (*Theodosian Code* 16.2.1, 2). Such directives encouraged the view that bishops and other clergy were already, by virtue of their office, men in public life. Christian congregations, too, found a place in law. Slaves could now be manumitted by declaration before a gathering, in the presence of a bishop (*Theodosian Code* 4.7.1, 2.8.1; *Code of Justinian* 1.13.1); episcopal courts were given official legal status (*Code of Justinian* 1.27.1; *Sirmondian Constitutions* 1), clergy exempted from taxation (*Theodosian Code* 16.2.10), and the Christian day of worship (Sunday) declared a day of rest (*Code of Justinian* 3.12.2). Moreover, Constantine removed one legal impediment to Christian practice when he rescinded the old Augustan penalties against celibacy and childlessness (*Theodosian Code* 8.16.1) and sought to privilege Christians over Jews for the first time (*Theodosian Code* 16.8.3; Lindner 1987: 120–124). Moreover, he ordained that Jews be restrained from attacking members of their communities who converted to Christianity (*Theodosian Code* 16.8.1; *Code of Justinian* 1.9.3; *Sirmondian Constitutions* 4; Lindner 1987: 124–132, 138–144). These laws are not as innocuous as they might appear. They provide legal privileges for Christians and remove traditional privileges enjoyed by Jews.

The most controversial question relating to Constantine's legislation is that relating to traditional sacrifice. Eusebius makes a remark to the effect that Constantine abolished it altogether (*Life of Constantine* 2.45). This statement has been variously believed and disbelieved (Barnes 1981: 210–212; Drake 1982: 462–466). Endeavours to harmonize the evidence have been offered (Errington 1988; Bradbury 1994). Constantine's abhorrence of blood sacrifice is clear from his own statements and his preference for Christian governors ensured that public sacrifices normally performed by imperial officials would be discontinued (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 2.44; Bradbury 1994: 129–130).

Constantine as imperial patron

Constantine's patronage of the Christian Church also produced architectural innovation. Christians had not developed a distinct architecture for their public buildings for the simple reason that they did not have many. Those which they did possess were, by and large, private dwellings converted for the purpose like the third-century church building at Dura-Europos (Krautheimer 1965: 4–8), or humble affairs of mud and stone, as at Aqaba (Parker 1998: 254). In the city of Rome itself, there are twenty-five known pre-Constantinian Christian communities (Kirsch 1935; Lampe 1989) that met in converted premises. In all likelihood, these were confiscated by the state during the Great Persecution. Constantine unconditionally restored all Christian property very soon after his victory over Maxentius (Eusebius, *H.E.* 10.2.15–17).

These were humble venues and did not befit a religious community now in imperial favour. To ameliorate this, in early November 312 Constantine donated land to the Church on the outskirts of Rome (Krautheimer 1979: 89–90, 1983: 13–15). This was the station of the praetorian cavalry unit, the *equites singulari*, now disbanded. On this site, there swiftly rose the great basilica which we know today as St John Lateran (Holloway 2004: 57 – 8). Across the Tiber, in the Vatican fields, the entire side of a hill was levelled, the spoil tumbling into, and filling up, a gully in which both a pagan cemetery and a cenotaph of St Peter were located (Toynbee and Ward-Perkins 1956; Holloway 2004: 120–155.). Upon this terrace, another monumental basilica was constructed, dedicated to St Peter.

Temple-building had always been a major feature of imperial euergetism. When Constantine ordered the construction of the new Christian basilicas within Rome itself, he was extending imperial munificence to the new faith. This accorded the Christian Church a status which it had never possessed before, and permitted it to express a new grandeur of display in ritual and self-advertisement (Johnson in Lenski 2006: 278–297).

Such properties were maintained by a generous endowment (Janes 1998: 54–56). The *Liber Pontificalis*, an early chronicle of the Papacy, lists the extraordinary amount of property which Constantine donated to the Church. The well of Constantine's financial generosity to the various sees was both deep and wide. In taking on the role of imperial patron of the Church, however, Constantine also necessarily involved himself in its internal disputes.

Constantine's new city

Although Constantine embellished Rome with great cathedrals, perhaps the most enduring of his architectural legacies lay on the Bosporus. There, after the defeat of Licinius in 324, he laid the foundations of a new city – Constantinople. This was to be a Christian city, uncontaminated by pagan cult or tradition (Barnes 1981: 212). Constantine, at first, did not spend much time in his new foundation, preferring to base himself at Nicomedia while his newest city was being constructed. Occasionally, he made tours of inspection, but it was not until 330, when the city was formally dedicated, that he moved there permanently (Dagron 1974: 33; Barnes 1982: 69, 75–78). His foundation was embellished with art plundered from Greece and endowed with a hippodrome, baths and a Senate house (Dagron 1974: 36–37; Krautheimer 1983: 45–50). No temples were built, however. Instead, a series of great churches was constructed, the most notable being the Church of the Holy Wisdom – a vast

and lofty basilica attached to the imperial palace (Krautheimer 1983: 50–55). This landmark cathedral was located in the ceremonial heart of the new city. It proclaimed the solid institutional identification between emperor and Church.

This identification was strengthened in the mausoleum that Constantine planned for himself. This became the Church of the Holy Apostles (*Apostoleion*) and was intended to be endowed with memorials of all twelve apostles (Krautheimer 1983: 55–60; Dagron 2003: 138–141). There he would lie as the thirteenth and last of the messengers of God.

When Constantine founded this city, Rome had long ceased to be the centre of the imperial world. The capital was where the emperor was (Millar 1977: 15–53). He intended this to be a new metropolis, attracting a population there through tempting incentives (Eunapius, *Lives of the Sophists* 462). He endowed a senatorial class for the city, although not one equivalent to their venerable western colleagues. Their titles and entitlements differed. This new town was, however, constructed in Constantine's image. As such, it became Constantine's favoured place – simultaneously a museum of the pagan past and an aggressive assertion of the Christian future. It became a capital as Constantine and his successors increasingly made their residence there.

The pilgrimage of Helena

In 326, Constantine's mother Helena and Eutropia, the widow of Maximian travelled to Palestine. During the course of their tour, they located a number of holy places including the sites of the crucifixion and resurrection. Constantine ordered the construction of major shrines in these places, most notably the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and, in Jerusalem, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, a vast and innovative structure which enclosed both Calvary and the empty tomb (Odahl 2004: 211–218; Johnson 2006: 292–294).

Constantine and Christian dissent

The Donatist controversy

Constantine's involvement in the doctrinal and disciplinary affairs of the Church commenced with an appeal for his intervention in a dispute over the see of Carthage. This was being contested by rival bishops, Caecilian and Majorinus. The appeal to the emperor was not without precedent. In 270 a dispute over the tenure of the see of Antioch went to the Emperor Aurelian. On that occasion, Aurelian had referred the appellants to the Bishop of Rome (Eusebius, *H.E.* 7.30.19–21). On this occasion, the African church appealed to Constantine who did likewise, referring the matter to Miltiades, the Bishop of Rome (Eusebius, *H.E.* 10.5.18).

Miltiades' response was to call a wider council of bishops to Rome to resolve the matter. They judged in favour of Caecilian, and the response of the supporters of Majorinus (Donatists) was to appeal once more to the judgement of Constantine. Constantine ordered a council of bishops to be held at Arles, a city in which he was sometimes resident, in order to hear the appeal. The Donatists again lost their suit and sought a third time for Constantine's intervention. Perhaps exasperated by their persistence, Constantine finally took a stand, rejecting the Donatist appeal and aligning himself firmly with the previous judgements of Miltiades and the Council of Arles.

Constantine's involvement in the Donatist dispute had been unwilling, forced by the intransigence of the Donatists themselves. Nevertheless, it taught him a valuable lesson about the relationship between himself and the Christians. When the next controversy arose, his approach was far more interventionist.

The Arian controversy

For some years, a dispute had been brewing between two Alexandrian clergy about the nature of the godhead. A presbyter, Arius, asserted a theological view which emphasized the transcendence of the

Father, and within which the Son was conceived of as a subsequent and was therefore neither co-eternal nor co-valent with the Father. To his critics, it seemed that Arius had departed from strict monotheism, in favour of ditheism, positing a greater and a lesser god. Arius was a popular preacher whose views found ready acceptance, both within his own community in Alexandria, and also within the wider Christian world. He also encountered considerable opposition, not the least from his own bishop, Alexander.

When Constantine took control of the eastern provinces, after the final defeat of Licinius in 324, he was presented with this controversy. Unlike the Donatist schism, this was over a matter of theological doctrine rather than church order. Constantine's first instinct was to seek to negotiate an agreement between the disputants. Accordingly, he sent Ossius of Cordova, his theological adviser, to Alexandria to mediate a solution. With him, Ossius took a letter from Constantine which characterized the whole matter a triviality; an inconsequential conflict over an unnecessary question. He urged forbearance and forgiveness (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 2.63–72).

For the participants, however, such a dispute had far greater weight than mere philosophical hair-splitting. Neither could simply beg to differ. Ossius himself sought to resolve the conflict by resorting to Church order: Alexander was bishop; Arius a presbyter who owed him obedience. A subsequent gathering of bishops in Antioch likewise supported episcopal authority over priestly inspiration. At this council, three of Arius' sympathizers were provisionally excommunicated, pending confirmation at a council to be held later in the year at Ancyra (Barnes 1981: 213–214). No such council was, however, called. Constantine, perhaps dismayed by the failure of the bishops to agree amongst themselves, intervened and summoned a council at Nicaea.

Constantine at Nicaea

Nicaea was the most comprehensive church council called to that point, with representatives from all parts of the empire and also from dioceses outside the empire. Constantine's patronage of the Council was apparent from its inception. The bishops were transported, housed and fed at public expense. The sessions were not held in an ecclesiastical building, but on imperial property. Constantine opened the conference, addressing the bishops and exhorting them to reach agreement. Then he withdrew and Ossius assumed the presidency of the Council. Constantine was never formally a member of the Council, but his stamp was upon it, and all of the participants were aware of his own desire to reach a settlement.

In this, he seems to have been let down. As with the Donatists, Constantine was disappointed by the incapacity of the bishops to reach an agreement. In his various interventions, Constantine himself sought to be a voice for moderation. Final resolution upon a doctrinal statement, however, could only be enforced by Constantine's own insistence that it would be the final word on the matter, and dissent meant exile.

Constantine was to be frustrated here. While the Council of Nicaea achieved many things, its confected agreement on the divine nature failed, and the dissident Arian church continued to expand and thrive. When, on his deathbed, Constantine was baptized, it was by the Arian Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia.

Constantine and the empire

Constantine's reforms

Constantine's adoption and championing of Christianity affected much of the imperial policy which Constantine pursued. While many of his reforms do not appear, at least overtly, to be Christian, it was impossible for Constantine not to nuance them somehow in favour of the Church. Military chaplains appeared, for example, for the first time (Jones 1953); Christians were preferred for administrative posts; bishops were entrusted with juridical responsibilities.

In general, Constantine continued the tenor of administrative reform commenced by Diocletian. He stablilized the currency by abandoning the traditional silver standard and instead striking a new gold coin of remarkable purity (the *solidus*) which became a highly prized and stable means of storing and transferring value (Jones 1964: 107–109). Within the structure of the imperial administration, he created new offices and orders which completed a process, begun in the time of Augustus, of the transformation of the emperor's private household into a stratified, hierarchical imperial court.

He also made changes to the structure of the army. Significantly, he supplemented its numbers by recruitment from outside the empire. Constantine's later pagan critic, Zosimus, charged him with barbarizing the army (*New History* 2. 34). While the charge is exaggerated and rhetorical, it is certainly true that in the generations which immediately followed even senior commanders could be drawn from the ranks of non-Roman communities. The static arrangements of the first two imperial centuries had been slowly dispensed with. Between them, Diocletian and Constantine remodelled the imperial army so that it was, in essence, two forces. There were troops on permanent garrison duty (the *limitanei*), who acted as a police and intelligence service. Then there were the mobile field armies (*comitatenses*), flexible enough to act as a defensive force when occasion arose, and as an offensive force without denuding the garrisons of necessary troops.

Constantine's wars

Constant campaigning on the frontiers by Constantine and his predecessors had created a measure of peace and security. The necessity for such skirmishing continued in his later years. Campaigns are attested against Danubian peoples (particularly the Sarmatians, Barnes 1982: 75–79, 258). Towards the end of his reign, he mounted a successful campaign in Dacia (modern Transylvania), in which he claimed to have recovered territory which had been given up in the time of Aurelian (Julian, *The Caesars* 329 b–d; Barnes 1982: 80).

Relations with the great rival empire of Sassanid Persia were less successful. When Armenia became a Christian nation, Rome's position in the east was strengthened. Some time later, he received Hormisdas, a Sassanid prince, as a refugee from the rule of the Great King, Shapur II. At some point, he personally wrote a letter to Shapur, asserting a role as protector of Shapur's Christian subjects (Barnes 1985: 130–133). War between the two states broke out during the last years of Constantine's reign. Persian troops invaded Armenia and expelled its Christian king. Constantine responded by making his own disposition for the rule of Armenia: his nephew Hannibalianus was proclaimed as its king, and an army was sent under his son Constantius to enforce this claim (*Epitome de Caesaribus* 41.20; *Origo Constantini imperatoris* 6.35). The initial campaigning was a success. Constantius drove the Persians from the key fortress town of Amida, and in the course of the fighting Narses, another of Shapur II's brothers, was slain (Dodgeon and Lieu 1991: 153–155). Emboldened by success, Constantine was preparing a further assault when he was overtaken by illness and died in May 337. His death left the Persian War as a long and bloody inheritance for his successors.

Constantine's dynasty

Constantine's family was a large one. His father's marriage to Theodora had produced six children, three of whom (his sisters) were deployed in dynastic matches (Barnes 1982: 37). His half-brothers, on the other hand, he preferred to keep away from the centre of power (Leadbetter 1998b: 80). Julian complained that this was at the behest of Constantine's mother who wished to see her own grandchildren exalted (Libanius, *Oration* 14.30). Like his father, Constantine fathered a son by a concubine, Minervina (Jones *et al.* 1971: 602–603). This son, Crispus, was a bright and engaging prince. Raised to the rank of Caesar in 317, he played an active role in Constantine's victory over Licinius in 324 (Jones *et al.* 1971: 233). Shortly after, however, he was executed, probably a victim of the clumsy intrigues of his stepmother Fausta, who herself met a similar fate not long afterwards (Jones *et al.* 1971: 326).

The death of Crispus, together with the relegation of Constantine's half-brothers, left the succession clear for Constantine's sons by Fausta. There were three of these, Constantine, Constantius and Constans (Barnes 1982: 43). Each of these was raised to the rank of Caesar in the lifetime of their father: Constantine in 317, Constantius in 324 and Constans in 333 (Barnes 1982: 7–8; Kienast 1990: 305, 307, 309). In 335, however, Constantine complicated this neat arrangement. His nephew Flavius Dalmatius was raised to the rank of Caesar also (Kienast 1990: 303). This, together with the new prominence of Constantius I's children, occasioned a succession crisis after the death of Constantine. The consequence was a long interregnum. Uncertainty was only resolved by the intervention of the army, which proclaimed Constantine's sons his legitimate successors and killed everyone else.

Constantine never ruled alone. He successfully safeguarded his own position through the deployment of members of his family as nominal colleagues. While this was of great political benefit to Constantine, it left an ambiguous legacy. His sons came to rule after his death through violence rather than a peaceful transition. Their own relationship was marked by mutual suspicion. In 340, Constantine was eliminated by Constans, who was in turn removed by a usurper. Constantius II, himself childless was forced to turn to the two surviving grandsons of Constantius I. Of these, he executed one (Gallus), while the other rebelled against him (Julian). Julian's own reign was ephemeral. His death in 363 marks the end of a dynasty that had, only one generation previously, been richly populated (Frakes in Lenski 2006: 98–103).

Note

1 See www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1544019/Sceptre-from-Roman-emperor-exhibited.html

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51
ANTHONY THE GREAT

Columba Stewart OSB

Whose Anthony?

Having let go of our hope that we can recover 'history' as if it were something awaiting discovery with the proper tools, it is harder to surrender our desire to know about the 'real' person when considering someone like Anthony the Great. Once pen was put to papyrus, a gap was fixed between the observed and the observer, magnified by each subsequent reading. When the subject is famous, immensely famous, like Anthony, and the literary portraits are numerous, the resulting parallax effect of so many viewpoints, each crowded with viewers, becomes severe. The 'quest for the historical Anthony' has consumed students of monasticism just as their colleagues in New Testament studies have circled round and round in their quest for another, and even more famous, maker – and product – of history.

We can be confident on the basis of many written sources, and of so many different kinds, that Anthony was a major, even dominant, presence in early fourth-century Egyptian monasticism. It was Anthony's fortune not only to *be* great but also to have a masterful and highly placed biographer intent on keeping him so. The *Life of Anthony*, written by the controversial bishop Athanasius of Alexandria within a year of the monk's death at his retreat in the eastern desert, has been the most successful and widely imitated hagiographical text of all time. It evoked competition from Jerome, who wrote a rival *Life of Paul the First Hermit*. It prompted Augustine's crisis of conversion when he heard of the spiritual triumphs of an uneducated Copt. The *Life* inspired remarkable paintings by Bosch, Grünewald, Breugel and others. Breugel's version sparked the literary imagination of the nineteenth-century French novelist Gustave Flaubert, who in his *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* took it upon himself to supplement the dialogue provided by the more discreet Athanasius. Anthony provoked scorn from Gibbon but fascinated other scholars, who have not ceased from producing study after study about him, especially in the last century and a half. What is perhaps most remarkable is that Anthony's life and teaching, however mediated, remain an inspiration to men and women claiming to follow him in the monastic life. This monk, and the traditions surrounding him, must indeed be reckoned with.

Principal sources

Athanasius' portrait of Anthony has been the most important one for both monastic audiences and other readers. The longest and most detailed account, it is the predictable mix of factual information gathered from those who knew Anthony, idealized scenarios about Anthony's life and teaching, and

Athanasius' own agenda. The question of authorship has been settled in Athanasius' favour, though without excluding the possibility that he worked with some earlier documents about Anthony (Bartelink 1994: 27–42; Brakke 1994). He certainly wrote with earlier literary models in mind, establishing Anthony as a Christian (and superior) counterpart to the philosopher-heroes whose biographies circulated widely in the Hellenistic world.

Opinions vary about the reliability of Athanasius' version of Anthony and his teaching. Attempts have been made to test the *Life* by checking its data against other extant information about Anthony (Rubenson 1995: 126–91). As is generally the case with such assessments, the peculiarities of the sources themselves tend to make any conclusions about them impressionistic. The position taken here is that Athanasius' portrait does resemble the Anthony found in the other sources, though the biographer has exercised his power to emphasize and to de-emphasize certain traits. These traits and Athanasius' handling of them will be considered later. The important point to note here is that the *Life* was an immediate success, soon translated into Latin (in two versions) and several other languages, widely distributed, and eagerly read in both Christian east and west (Bartelink 1994: 37–42, 68–70, 95–108). It is arguable that no other non-biblical Christian text has enjoyed so wide a circulation or been so influential a model for spiritual biographies of other notable figures such as Martin of Tours, Syncletica of Alexandria or the monks remembered by Cyril of Scythopolis.

Next in importance to the *Life* are the many sayings, or *apophthegmata*, attributed to Anthony or about him (Dörries 1949; Rubenson 1995: 145–62). The textual history and editorial complexities of the sayings are notorious, and using them as a check against other texts becomes a scholarly hall of mirrors. On the other hand, they can provide broad-stroke portraits of their subjects, as is immediately evident when reading sayings of or about major figures such as Arsenius, John Kolobos or Poemen. One gains a sense of these monks even though the details cannot be pressed too closely. The sayings about Anthony, especially the most frequently repeated ones, are important evidence for how Anthony's monastic heirs chose to remember him. While surely preserving some actual dicta and historical information, they in any case illustrate the place accorded Anthony in the tradition and highlight what later monks found most constructive or memorable about his teaching.

Athanasius' *Life* was not the only narrative portrait of Anthony in early monastic literature. Palladius (*c.* 364–*c.* 425), an educated monk sympathetic to the controversial spiritual theology of Origen and his heir Evagrius Ponticus, has several stories about Anthony in his *Lausiac History* (*c.* 419). This work was actually written almost seventy years after Athanasius' *Life* though it was based on the author's sojourn in Egypt at the end of the fourth century. Palladius had read the *Life of Anthony* – so had virtually everyone of his social class and religious interests – but he also had access to other sources from his own visits to various Egyptian monasteries, including Anthony's at Pispir near the Nile. Palladius' Anthony sounds more like a classic desert elder than does Athanasius', perhaps because Palladius wrote from inside the monastic tradition and was more interested in Anthony's interactions with other monks than with the non-monastic luminaries highlighted by Athanasius. Palladius also wrote after Anthony's legacy and 'official' monastic reputation were firmly established.

In the *Lausiac History* we find Anthony capable of severity toward other monks in the name of spiritual discipline (*LH* 21–22), a quality absent from Athanasius' portrayal. Palladius also notes Anthony's strategem for screening visitors (*LH* 21.8), another indication that however holy he may have been, he did not suffer fools gladly. Similar in tone to Palladius' accounts are the references to Anthony in the *History of the Monks of Egypt*, a travelogue roughly contemporary to the *Lausiac History*. Both works are most significant for the information they provide about Anthony's network of disciples and their descendants, who were leaders of the Origenist party to which Palladius belonged (Rubenson 1995: 178–82).

The last major source of information about Anthony from the early period comes from the hagiography of the 'other' Egyptian monastic tradition, Pachomian cenobitism. Two versions of the *Life of Pachomius*, a kind of biography-cum-institutional history, describe a visit to Anthony by Pachomian monks shortly after their leader's death in 346 (*Bohairic Life of Pachomius* 126–33; *Greek Life* 120).

The upshot of the interview is Anthony's praise of Pachomius and his communal form of monastic life. The Coptic *Life* even includes Anthony's regrets that he had been unable to become a cenobite himself! Setting aside questions of historical accuracy, the significance of the accounts lies in the importance accorded to Anthony's validation of the Pachomian movement as authentically monastic.

These were the principal sources *about* Anthony. There remain the writings *by* Anthony. The *Life* by Athanasius mentions Anthony's correspondence with emperors (*Life* 81) and with an Arian official (*Life* 86). In the *Life of Pachomius* there are references to letters sent by Anthony to monks and to Athanasius; the Coptic version quotes from these letters (*Bohairic Life of Pachomius* 126–34; *Greek Life* 120). Seven other letters by Anthony, all addressed to monks and pertaining to the spiritual life, have survived in various states. Jerome notes the existence of the letters and their translation into Greek, though it is unclear whether he himself had read them (*De viris illustribus* 88). Obviously the *Letters* are of great importance for any study of Anthony since they are the most direct evidence we have of his own teaching (Rubenson 1995: 35–42). They contain no biographical information, though their affinities with Origen's theology and their use of philosophical language have important consequences for an assessment of Anthony's educational background. Only one contains information about its addressees, who were monks at Arsinoë (Letter 6).

The *Letters* bear notable similarities of style and *Letters 2–7* have close parallels of structure and content. This means that at least those six were probably written at about the same time; a reference to Arius in *Letter 4* suggests a date in the late 330s, i.e. about twenty years before Anthony's death (Rubenson 1995: 42–6). The Letters, then, offer snapshots of Anthony's concerns for particular audiences at a particular time. The letters quoted in the *Life of Pachomius* are later (346, the year of Pachomius' death); they provide no information about Anthony himself though the use of the epithet 'Israelite', interpreted as 'one who sees God', is a stylistic parallel with the earlier letters (*Letters* 3.6; cf. 5.1–2, 6.2, 78, 93; 7.5, 58).

The influence of Anthony's *Letters* on later monastic tradition has been much less than that of the *Life*. The Coptic original survives only in one seventh-century fragment. The Greek translation of the *Letters*, the earliest and also the most useful for wide distribution, has been lost. The Syriac version seems to have been early but partial (by 534, only one letter), and the Latin version is relatively modern (1475, from the now-lost Greek text). The best surviving witness is the Georgian translation. Much of the material is preserved in a thirteenth-century Arabic translation made from the lost Coptic original; according to the best study of the *Letters*, the Arabic appears to be the only version based on the Coptic (Rubenson 1995: 15–34). This curious legacy suggests that even monks found the *Life* and the sayings to be more useful to them than the *Letters*. There are also aspects of the letters, particularly their more speculative passages, which would have made later readers nervous after the traumas of the Origenist Controversy. It has been suggested that the Anthony of the letters differs rather considerably from Athanasius' hero (Rubenson 1995); to assess this claim we will look at the teaching of the *Letters* in more detail shortly.

It is clear from even this brief review of the sources that we have to approach Anthony through the impressions, memories and agenda of others except in so far as we can use the *Letters* to nuance those perspectives. To evaluate Anthony's role in monastic tradition, however, is a somewhat different matter than seeking the historical person. To begin to see Anthony as the greater number of his followers have seen him means working with all of the sources available. The resulting construct may not be 'historical' but it is arguably 'authentic' as a monastic archetype in which we can see the genesis of practices and teaching which would become central to monastic spirituality.

The story

The basic plot of Anthony's life as presented by Athanasius is easily told. Born a Christian to prosperous landowning parents, he was orphaned with his younger sister when he was eighteen. Following a call to the ascetic life manifested externally in a dramatically literal obedience to Jesus' commands

to leave all for his sake and to renounce all cares, Anthony disposed of his property, placed his sister in the care of local virgins and apprenticed himself to a village ascetic. Subject to the usual struggles of disengagement from the past and from alternative ways of life, Anthony showed a marked eagerness to confront the challenges directly, spending time in solitude in tombs at the edge of the nearby desert. After severe and frightening trials, he resolved to pursue greater solitude and made the move that would bring him fame.

Going deeper into the desert, away from the security offered by proximity to settled land, he lived twenty years as a recluse in an abandoned fort at Pispir. After his protracted retreat he became available to both monks and seculars for advice. Many followed his example and settled around his retreat. He made at least two trips to Alexandria, one in the first decade of the fourth century to show his solidarity with Christian martyrs, the second (in 337 or 338) to fight Arianism.

In time, he sought greater solitude and journeyed deeper into the eastern desert, where he found a site remarkable for its beauty and its fresh spring. There he established his so-called 'Inner Mountain', from which he would commute periodically to the 'Outer Mountain', his first retreat at Pispir, to offer advice and teaching. He died at the Inner Mountain in 356 at an advanced age (Athanasius claims 105) and his Life was written the following year.

To this sketch we can add a few important elements from other sources. First, the *Letters* prove that Athanasius' references to Anthony's lack of letters (*Life* 1.2; 3.7; 73.3; 85.5; 93.4) are not to be taken as suggesting illiteracy but rather a Christian education instead of a primarily philosophical one (cf. *Life* 4.1, 44.2). Even Athanasius' Anthony, depicted as refuting the arguments of visiting philosophers by virtue of his faith in Christ and knowledge of the Bible (*Life* 74–80), urges his disciples to write down their thoughts as a technique of self-knowledge and discipline (*Life* 55.9–12). Study of the *Letters* reveals an acquaintance with the writings of Origen and a familiarity with the Hellenistic thought-world of the time. Despite his use of interpreters when meeting Greek-speakers (*Life* 74.2, 77.1; cf. 81.4), Anthony must have known some Greek himself (Rubenson 1995: 41–2); in any case Coptic is saturated with Greek loanwords.

Second, other sources provide the names of Anthony's closest associates. Athanasius names only two monks, Amoun of Nitria (*Life* 60) and Paphnutius 'the monk and confessor', bishop of the Upper Thebaid (*Life* 58.3). Neither was Anthony's disciple. Palladius and the *Apophthegmata*, however, identify as Anthony's close followers Paul the Simple and Macarius the Egyptian ('the Great') (Palladius, *Dialogue* 17), and the *History of the Monks of Egypt* names Antony's successors at Pispir, Ammonas and then Pityrion (*HM* 15.1–2). This lineage connects Anthony to major figures in later Egyptian monasticism. In sayings and letters attributed to these monks we can see the development of Anthony's teaching. Those texts both verify the monastic authenticity of Athanasius' presentation of Anthony and confirm Anthony's links to theologically sophisticated members of the Egyptian monastic scene.

Sacred geography

Anthony was not the first monk, nor even the first hermit. What set him apart in the eyes of his contemporaries was his commitment to *anachoresis*, 'withdrawal'. Anthony's practice of *anachoresis* was expressed physically by greater and greater distance from settled regions. The stages of physical withdrawal were mirrored psychologically in his progressively deeper encounter with himself, a theme we will return to later.

Athanasius presents the physical journey in a somewhat stylized manner, but other sources confirm Anthony's withdrawal into deeper solitude at greater distances from human settlement. The move to the edge of the village as an ascetic was followed by brief periods spent in the tombs in the near desert. The spiritual symbolism of being sealed within a tomb is obvious, but for Anthony, an Egyptian, the move from the realm of the living to the abode of the dead had even more significance. The geographical distinction between life and death was clear in a land dependent on

the river for sustenance. One did not have to go far to find the desert, to leave the zone of safety. But the difference was dramatic. The abode of the dead was also the home of the demons, spiritual counter-forces to human progress.

For Anthony to spend time in tombs was more than morbid curiosity. It was a challenge to everything within and beyond him that was opposed to life. Athanasius plays up this aspect of Anthony's story, using him as an exemplar of the fully divine Christ's victory over evil and death, a victory shared with those who believe in him. Although Athanasius' theological agenda is plain, there is no indication that he is betraying or even greatly distorting Anthony's own struggles or his reliance on faith in Christ. The direct literary parallels between the *Life of Anthony* and Athanasius' other writings are largely confined to the sections describing Anthony's debates with visiting philosophers (*Life* 74–9; see Bartelink 1994: 36–7). Furthermore, Anthony himself attacks Arius in *Letter* 4.17–8. As we shall see, battle against the demons was the principal focus of Anthony's ascetic teaching as recorded in both the *Life* and the *Letters*.

Anthony's decision to become a solitary in the desert was regarded by his peers as something novel (*Life* 3.2, 11.1–2). A link with civilization remained, for he settled in an abandoned fort 'in the mountain' (i.e. above the river valley) 'across the river' (*Life* 12.3) at the site known as Pispir. Neither was it the end of human contact, for he relied on others to bring him bread every six months and acquired disciples who would visit him there, though Athanasius claims he would only speak to them through the door and not actually see them (*Life* 12–13). A definitive break with ordinary society and with ascetic custom had nonetheless been made, and this became the basis for his extraordinary reputation. After twenty years he became available for consultation and would leave his hermitage to visit other monks, including those who settled around him. The scope of his pastoral activity will receive more attention later.

After an unspecified time, he established a further retreat at what became known as the 'Inner Mountain' to distinguish it from the 'Outer Mountain' at Pispir. This move into the deep desert required both divine guidance and reliance on a Saracen caravan. Together they led him to a remote but beautiful location distinguished by a striking mountain and a vigorous fresh-water spring (*Life* 49–50). The site traditionally considered that of the Inner Mountain, where the Coptic

Figure 51.1 The Monastery of Saint Anthony today, with his 'Inner Mountain' rising behind. Photo: C. Stewart

Figure 51.2 Entrance to Anthony's cave near the top of the 'Inner Mountain'. Photo C. Stewart

Monastery of Saint Anthony (Deir Amba Antonios) can be visited to this day, was three days' journey east of the river toward the Red Sea.

Athanasius records that Anthony 'loved' his mountain. There he spent most of his time for the rest of his life, though he continued to visit Pispir for pastoral purposes (*Life* 57–8, 84.3–5, 85.1–4). Occasionally he would receive visitors at the Inner Mountain but the distance and harsh conditions of the journey would have discouraged all but the most intent (*Life* 50.7, 59.2, 82.3). Tended in extreme old age by two disciples, Anthony died at the Inner Mountain in 356 at the age of 105 and was buried, claims Athanasius, in a secret location (*Life* 92).

Athanasius depicts Anthony's move into the desert as the beginning of monastic colonization of demon-held territory, threatening Satan's domination of lifeless regions (*Life* 14.7, 41.1–4). He complements this hyperbolic, propagandist stance with a more attractive vision of the desert as an alternative, truly Christian, society where prayer, love and ascetic discipline ensured peace (*Life* 44.2–4). Anthony himself was able to reestablish the paradisiacal harmony between human beings and animals (*Life* 50.8–9). The notion of an ideal society in the desert was not new; Philo had said the same of the Therapeutae in his treatise *On the Contemplative Life*. In the Christian and monastic context, however, there was an added theological dimension of establishing a kind of intermediate zone between earth and heaven in which human beings (and all of nature) were restored to their intended condition in preparation for eschatological glorification.

Anthropology and asceticism

The anthropology found in both *Life* and *Letters* presumes the essential goodness of human beings created with freedom of the will (*Life* 20; *Letters* 7). The decision to listen to evil insinuations by fallen spiritual essences (Satan, demons) led humans to an irrationality in which the body escaped the control of the intellect (Greek *nous*) and was subject to domination by the passions and constant suggestions from the demons (e.g. *Letters* 2). Alongside this basically biblical model there are elements of Origen's cosmological perspective emphasizing a fall from the original unity of spiritual essence to the present multiplicity of creatures (see *Letters* 6.5–6, 56–62, 84; cf. Rubenson 1995: 64–8). The incarnation and resurrection of Christ made 'resurrection of the mind' possible (*Letters* 2.23, etc.), to be realized through ascetic discipline prompted and supported by the Holy Spirit, who teaches knowledge and discernment (*Letters* 1.18–34).

The *Life* offers a generally holistic view of the interaction of body and spirit (*Life* 14.3–4, 67.6–8) while being suspicious of allowing the body too much in the way of concession (*Life* 45.2–7). This latter point is stressed in the *Letters*, which emphasize the captivity of the body to the passions and to evil spirits (e.g. *Letters* 6.51–3). Even so, the body is not scorned or ignored, but is involved in

the ascetic process and transformative work of the Spirit (*Letters* 1.46–71, *Life* 22.3, Antony, *Sayings* 8 and 13). The powerful pneumatology of the *Letters* is all the more striking when compared with the *Life*'s almost entirely Christological orientation. It may be here particularly that one sees the anti-Arian agenda of Athanasius, for whom a potent pneumatology would not have been nearly as helpful as an emphasis on the divine power of Christ. The *Letters* present a more balanced perspective that is both centred on Christ and dynamically pneumatological.

As Athanasius describes it, Anthony's asceticism was typical of what we know about Egyptian anchoritic monasticism. It was a severe but, in relative terms, not an excessive regimen (*Life* 7.6, 47.2, 51.1). He ate once daily, relying on bread, salt, vegetables, olives and oil but excluding meat and wine (*Life* 7.6, 51.1). Often he would extend his fast and eat less frequently (*Life* 7.6, 47.2). He never bathed or used oil on his body (*Life* 7.6, 47.2, 93.1). He wore a goatskin garment with the hair turned inside, and slept on a mat or sometimes on the bare ground using a cloak given him by Athanasius (*Life* 4.1, 7.6, 47.2, 91.8–9). The basic elements of his spiritual discipline were dedication to prayer, especially in night-time vigil, memorization of biblical texts and manual labour (*Life* 4.1, 30.2, 44.2, 55; *Letters* 1.77). He worked both for personal economic support and to help the poor; it is noted in the Life that Anthony made rope to earn money for food (*Life* 30.2, 44.2, 53.1). The exhortatory nature of the *Letters* means that they have little to say about ascetic practices.

The distinctive traits of Anthony's ascetic teaching were his emphasis on focused intention and self-knowledge. The first is most prominent in the *Life*, the second pervades both *Life* and *Letters*. He cautioned against dwelling on memories of the past (*Life* 7.11; 20.1–2; cf. Anthony, *Sayings* 6). Monastic life means daily recommitment to the discipline (*Life* 7.12; 16.3; 47.1; 91.2) in awareness of the brevity of life (*Life* 16.4–8; 19.2–3; 45.1; 89.4; 91.3). In the *Letters*, self-knowledge is the overarching theme, set within the broadly 'gnostic' framework of those texts (Rubenson 1995: 59–64). In the *Life*, however, the Stoic language of 'paying heed (*prosechein*) to the self' is preferred (*Life* 3.1–2; 55.5–13; 91.3) and gnostic language is absent. This could be owing to anxiety on Athanasius' part that such language would be construed in a heterodox manner despite its roots in both biblical (especially Johannine) and Alexandrian tradition. In ascetic terms the difference is minimal, though theologically in the *Letters* the gnostic terminology is tied closely to the pneumatological emphasis equally absent in the *Life*. In later monastic texts the terminology of the *Life* would prevail.

Figure 51.3 View from Anthony's cave near the top of the 'Inner Mountain'. Photo: C. Stewart

Thoughts and demons

The practical application of self-knowledge is learning to 'discern spirits', i.e. to understand the activity of one's thoughts (*logismoi*) and the manipulation of them by demonic counter-forces (Stewart 2005). In the *Life of Anthony*, the terms 'demon', 'spirit' and 'thought' are used synonymously for these counter-forces, with a preference for 'demon' (60 instances versus 16 for 'thought' and 2 for 'spirit'). In the *Letters* the proportions are equal (about 6 each), and the term 'passion' occurs alongside them to describe the human faculty stirred by demonic suggestion. Athanasius claims that Anthony learned how to understand and combat the demons from the Bible (*Life* 7.3; 16.1); the key text, Eph. 6:11–17, is cited or alluded to five times in the *Life*.

Athanasius describes Anthony's personal struggles with memories and temptations, especially in the early stages of his monastic life, as a progression from issues about external material and social issues (possessions, family, money, fame) to bodily ones (food, leisure, lust), and finally to emotional issues such as struggle with sadness and discouragement (see *Life* 5). The descriptions in the *Life* are vivid: he experienced physical traumata (to the point of unconsciousness, *Life* 8), heard voices, and saw apparitions (*Life* 6, 8–9, 13, 35, 51.2–5).

These descriptions are fascinating but disturbing to the reader. To help the reader understand their significance, Athanasius includes a lengthy discourse (28 chapters) attributed to Anthony summarizing his teaching about how the demons play on human weakness to discourage hopes for progress (*Life* 16–43; see Guillaumont and Guillaumont 1957: 189–96). Although we cannot know how much of the address is actually attributable to Anthony, its basic teaching clearly derives from considerable ascetic experience and must have come to Athanasius from within the monastic movement. This text, or perhaps one should say the teaching contained in it, was the basis for later development by ascetic theologians such as Evagrius Ponticus (d. 399). In the *Letters* the appeal for self-knowledge is directed in the first place toward understanding the inner confusion caused by sin and demonic influence; one could see *Letters* 1 and 6 as counterparts to the discourse in the *Life*.

Figure 51.4 The temptations of Anthony as imagined by Jan and Raphael Sadeler, after figures by Maarten de Vos, *c.* 1590

Anthony is more interested in providing practical directives than in developing a demonology as such (see *Life* 21.5, and cf. the emphasis on Anthony's experience in 22.4, 39–41, 51–3). The general theological framework is the conventional one, articulated and developed by Origen, that demons are fallen spiritual creatures motivated by jealousy to retard human recovery of original goodness (*Life* 21–2, *Letters* 6.30–62; see Daniélou 1957: 182–9). In both *Life* and *Letters* the ascetic's confrontation with the demons is placed within a cosmic salvation history that regards the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ as a definitive turning point in the human struggle against sin. Since Christ's coming, the demons have been robbed of their real power and must do what they can through deception and pretense (*Life* 28–9).

The ascetic's task is to see through the schemes of the demons and to claim the power that comes through invoking the name of Christ (as in the *Life*) or receiving the Spirit (as in the *Letters*). Indeed, Athanasius uses Anthony's triumph over the demons as a case in point that Christians serve the true God and tread the false gods (the demons) of the pagans underfoot (*Life* 94). Demons have no bodies of their own, which makes them invisible (*Letters* 6.50), impossible to exclude (*Life* 28.3–5), and able to move so quickly from place to place that they can seem to predict the future on the basis of what they have seen somewhere else (*Life* 33.2–6). Their lack of bodies means that they work within the human soul ('we are their bodies', *Letters* 6.51) and have direct access to thoughts. Therefore they can pattern themselves according to what they find, playing on anxiety or despair or pride: if one avoids such states, the demons have less room for manoeuvre (*Life* 27.4, 42). More dangerously, they can also masquerade as angels promising glory (*Life* 35.1) or as exemplary monks shaming one into despair (*Life* 25).

The best technique for discerning the activity of the demons is awareness of one's feelings: fear or distress are signs of demonic instigation, while joy and calm are good spirits (*Life* 35–6). Any intrusive thought or apparition is to be interrogated (*Life* 11.3–4; 43; cf. 41.2), and thoughts can be written down as an aid to self awareness (*Life* 55.9). The *Letters* repeat incessantly the imperative to know oneself. To block the corrosive work of the demons, Anthony used and recommended the use of biblical texts, especially the Psalms (*Life* 9.3; 13.7; 37.4; 39.3, 6; 40.5; 52.3). This practice, known in later tradition as 'antirrhetic' (literally, 'counter-suggestive') prayer, was a basic component of monastic discipline (Stewart 2011). He recommends invocation of the name of Christ (*Life* 39.2; 40.2; 41.6; 63.3) and use of the Sign of the Cross as defensive tactics (*Life* 13.5; 35.2; 53.2; 80.4). All of these techniques require the ability to be aware of what is happening and to achieve some distance from the immediacy of the experience. Such perspective is what 'discernment of spirits' means in practice; Anthony regards it as a divine grace given in answer to much prayer (*Life* 22.3, 38.5; *Letters* 1 and 6, passim).

Monk and minister

Anthony is famous as ascetic and hermit, but he was extraordinarily available to others. Athanasius notes how much he was loved in his early days as a village ascetic (*Life* 4.4) and emphasizes his grace of speech and presence (*Life* 14.6, 73.4, 87). In a crowd of monks, Anthony was unmistakable because of the calm and joy he radiated to others (*Life* 67.4–8). The calm was contagious: Anthony was a 'physician given to Egypt by God' (*Life* 87.3). One of the most striking sayings attributed to him contains the line: 'our life and death is with our neighbour' (Anthony, *Sayings* 9). He emphasized love for others (*Life* 4.1, 17.7, 44.2, 81.5–6; *Letters* 6.91–2; Anthony, *Sayings* 21) and the dangers of anger (*Life* 4.1, 17.2, 30.2, 55; *Letters* 6.33–9). The latter theme would be of central importance in later monastic writings.

In the *Life*, Anthony's twenty years of reclusion at the Outer Mountain ended when disciples broke down the door and called him forth to minister to them (*Life* 14.2). He handled such demands without apparent resentment (*Life* 14.4; 70.4), though he guarded his solitude; his most famous dictum is that a monk away from his cell is like a fish out of water (*Life* 85.3–4; Anthony, *Sayings* 10).

As noted earlier, after his withdrawal to the Inner Mountain he preferred to see visitors only at the Outer Mountain of Pispir. Palladius records that even at Pispir he used a receptionist, Brother Macarius, to screen visitors. If they were announced as coming 'from Egypt' they received a meal and a blessing; if 'from Jerusalem', Anthony would stay up all night talking with them (*LH* 21.8).

Naturally enough, his primary ministry was to other monks through teaching and counselling. This work is mentioned several times in the *Life* and was the context for the sayings preserved in the *apophthegmata* and for the *Letters*. However, monks were not his only audience. Many lay people came to him for healing. When health was granted he attributed it to the power of Christ called upon in prayer; when healing did not occur, Athanasius observes, the suppliants benefited from his words of encouragement (*Life* 48; 56–8; 84.1). According to the *Life*, Anthony visited Alexandria at least twice. The first time was to show solidarity with Christian martyrs during the fierce persecutions of early fourth-century Egypt. After visiting the imprisoned and practising a form of civil disobedience, he returned to the desert intent on sharing the suffering of the martyrs through his own ascesis (*Life* 46–7). About twenty years later (*c.* 337–8), he returned to Alexandria to battle Arianism in support of the Nicene cause (*Life* 69–70).

In addition to the letters mentioned earlier, he wrote to an Arian official in protest of his treatment of Nicene Christians (*Life* 86) and was consulted by emperors (*Life* 81.1; cf. Anthony, *Sayings* 31). One should note that these events and the extant collection of *Letters* appear to date from around the 330s, a period when Anthony's fame was well established and he was still active in his various ministries (if Athanasius' chronology is accurate, he would have been in his 80s). It is clear from the ubiquity of Anthony in monastic and other literary sources that Athanasius gives us a faithful portrait of this monk very much involved in the lives of other people.

Legacy

Anthony was both exemplar and exception. Later tradition venerated his example while cautioning his imitators to do nothing without counsel: Anthony's largely solitary formation was not to be the prevailing model (cf. Anthony, *Sayings* 1 for his angelic spiritual director). The psychological experiences Athanasius describes present the array – and even the stages – of struggles against forces of gluttony, lust, avarice, anger, sadness, accidie, vainglory and pride that would be systematized by Evagrius Ponticus at the end of the fourth century. The transformed, peaceful and inviting Anthony of the *Life* (e.g. *Life* 14 and 67) is the perfect embodiment of the ideal Evagrius would describe as *apatheia* or Cassian as 'purity of heart'. We cannot draw the lines of spiritual descent as precisely as we would like, but Anthony's influence on Ammonas, his successor at Pispir, and Macarius the Great, teacher of Evagrius, placed him at the origins of the most important theological tradition of the Egyptian desert.

Perhaps most significant is that Anthony was a force not only of that extraordinary period of early monastic fervour. His story has endured better than those of most of his contemporaries, and perhaps best of them all. A 'physician given to Egypt by God', indeed, but not to Egypt only.

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Note: References to the *Life of Anthony* (*Life*) are to chapter and sections as in Bartelink 1994; the same chapter divisions are found in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 26: 837–976, and in modern translations. References to the *Letters* are to the English translation in Rubenson 1995: 197–231; for differences of numbering among the versions, see Rubenson 1995: 15. References to the *Sayings* are to the Alphabetical Collection to be found in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 65: 72–440, translated in Ward 1975.

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52
PACHOMIUS THE GREAT

James E. Goehring

Tradition has recognised Pachomius (*c.* 292–346 CE), a native of Upper Egypt, as the founder of the first centrally regulated communal form of the ascetic life (coenobitism). His innovations included the development of the first monastic rule and the eventual interconnection of multiple monasteries into a centrally organised federation. The emerging success of his movement spawned imitation throughout Egypt and beyond, and in the process coenobitism took its place alongside the solitary hermit or anchorite and the laura or anchoritic community, as the third and final form of the ascetic life.

The sources

The Pachomian dossier contains an abundance of sources pertaining to Pachomius and his immediate successors, including lives, rules, letters, instructions, a testament, a few apophthegmata, miscellaneous stories and two accounts composed by outsiders. While the sources that claim Pachomian authorship (eleven letters, two instructions and five short fragments) offer some insight into the nature of his person and teaching, accounts of his life and the nature of his monastic innovation derive primarily from the complex vita tradition. Its portrayal of his role in the rise and success of coenobitic monasticism remains beyond dispute. When, however, one turns to examine the details of his life and the nature of his movement, it becomes clear that the later tradition adapted the story over time to the changing needs of the community. Communal memory continuously moulded it as a source of edification and support for current monks and, in the process, aligned it more closely with the contours of an increasingly powerful and centralised church.

The *Life of Pachomius*, which includes accounts of his immediate successors, survives in numerous versions and editions in Coptic, Greek, Arabic and Latin (Veilleux 1968: 16–107, 1980: 1–21). While it is possible to unravel the relationships between many of the versions, the continuing fluidity of the tradition over time within and between the various language groups compels any historical reconstruction of Pachomius' life to draw from multiple sources, each of which was both shaped by its author's and/or later editors' concerns. The First Greek Life (G1), for example, aligns Pachomius with later ecclesiastical concerns by incorporating anti-Origenist elements into its account, elements absent in the Coptic tradition (SBo 28; G1.31; Goehring 1999: 209–11). At the same time, however, the tradition preserves elements that seem problematic in terms of the movement's later concerns (Goehring 1986: 22–23). The same First Greek Life that added the anti-Origenist passage, for example, retains an

Figure 52.1 Icon of Pachomius from the Coptic Church in Faw Qibli. Photo James E. Goehring

enigmatic account of a church sanctioned meeting in Latopolis where Pachomius was summoned to answer questions about his clairvoyant abilities before a body of monks and bishops, and during which an attempt was made on his life (G1.112). As a result, any effort to disentangle the historical Pachomius from such accounts requires the same critical tools, care and caution applied in the quest for the historical Jesus. Furthermore, even the earliest accounts that one can imagine derive from after Pachomius' death, most likely in the tenure of Theodore as head of the federation. The latter's efforts to regain control of the federation, which came close to dissolving following Pachomius' death, coupled with his closer ties to the Alexandrian church hierarchy, impacted the way the story was told and memories formed. Subsequent versions or editions continued to reshape the stories as needed. In this context, one should note that most of the Coptic texts that survive derive from Shenoute's White Monastery, which, given the fluid nature of the literary tradition, raises the question of its impact on the transmission of the Pachomian story (Goehring, forthcoming 1).

The *Rules* attributed to Pachomius and his successor Horsiesius are similarly wrought with problems for the historian. Those attributed to Pachomius (*Precepts, Precepts and Institutes* and *Precepts and Laws*) are complete only in the Latin translation produced by Jerome from a Greek version he obtained in Lower Egypt (Veilleux 1968: 115–32, 1981: 7–13). While efforts have been made to

trace certain of the rules back to Pachomius (Joest 2009), in truth one is left with little certainty with respect both to the make-up of the rules at various points in Pachomius' life and to how precisely they were used within the community. The text that Jerome used may well have been flavoured, for example, under the influence of the Lower Egyptian monastery of Metanoia from which it came. The rules attributed to Horsiesius present similar problems. References within the collection suggest at least some stem from his successors, again calling the status of the collection as a whole into question with respect to its date and therefore the earlier functioning of the rules.

The various non- and semi-Pachomian accounts present their own difficulties. While the *Letter of Ammon* was composed by an individual who spent three years in his youth in the Upper Egyptian Pachomian monastery of Pbow during Theodore's tenure as abbot, he composed his account much later as a bishop in Lower Egypt in response to a request from Theophilus, mostly likely the Patriarch of Alexandria (Goehring 1986: 103–22). Not only did time reshape his memory of those distant years, but the nature of the request, given his current status as a bishop, would have compelled him to mould the story to serve the needs of the church as he then saw them. The brief account in the *History of the Monks in Egypt* (3.1–2), while composed by a visitor to an unnamed Pachomian monastery, visited the community some forty years after Pachomius' death. The account in Palladius' *Lausiac History* (32.1–12), perhaps with its story of the rule being delivered by an angel the most well-known piece of Pachomian hagiography, seems equally distant from the Pachomian milieu. The *Paralipomena* and other independent stories that survive have perhaps greater potential as history, though their provenance remains uncertain (Veilleux 1981: 1–13). In the case of the *Paralipomena*, the inclusion of non-Pachomian elements from Lower Egypt indicates at least some degree of separation. Moreover, in all of this material numerous fanciful enhancements enliven the account in traditional hagiographical form.

The eleven letters and two instructions attributed to Pachomius move us closer to the historical figure, though they present problems of their own (Veilleux 1982: 1–89). The letters incorporate a mysterious alphabetic code, which leaves their meaning opaque at best. While efforts have been made to break the code, some with apparent success (Joest 1996), the reasons behind its use remain unclear. The mere fact that Pachomius incorporated this technique in his letters, which none of his successors continued as far as we can tell, raises questions with respect to its origin and purpose. One is left to associate their use with an understood Egyptian love of signs and secret language, reflected in the culture's earlier use of hieroglyphs (Quecke 1975: 34–5). In the case of the two instructions, while there is little reason to doubt that they go back in their original form to Pachomius, it seems clear, at least in the case of the first and longer example, that the present text includes later interpolations from Horsiesius, a fact that once again underscores the fluidity of the tradition (Joest 2010). Even in the sources attributed to Pachomius, one must consider the possibility of changes effected upon the original text. Furthermore, even if these sources stem from Pachomius and offer insight into his teaching and concerns within the community, their evidence is limited with respect to the chronology of his life and the development of the monasteries. For such information, one remains dependent on the vita tradition.

Archeological evidence is limited and mostly stems from later periods in the movement's history. While the locations of the various monasteries within the federation have been identified in a general sense (Lefort 1939), only the site of the central monastery of Pbow is know exactly due to the remains of the great fifth-century basilica still visible in the modern village of Faw Qibli (see Figure 52.2). Archeological excavations have uncovered three churches built successively on the site, the earliest and smallest of which may date back to Pachomius' era (Grossmann 1991, 2002; Lease 1991). Unfortunately the excavations have been confined primarily to the basilica due to the surrounding construction of the village, and therefore evidence of the monastery proper is limited. Evidence of monastic occupation of caves in the nearby cliffs of the Jabal al Tarif and the Wadi Sheikh Ali (Lundhaug and Jenott 2015: 39–43; Goehring 2016) add to the evidence of the area's ascetic diversity.

Figure 52.2 Photo of surface remains of the great fifth-century Basilica of Pbow from the 1977–1978 season of excavations. Photo James E. Goehring

The discovery of the Nag Hammadi codices near the centre of the Pachomian federation has challenged traditional presentations of Pachomian monasticism. While this heterodox collection of texts offers no specific evidence of Pachomian origin and/or use, the possibility alone has compelled a rethinking of Pachomian monasticism. Although consensus on this issue seems unlikely at the moment, the mere fact that the traditionally portrayed orthodoxy of the Pachomian movement may have allowed for use of such materials compels one to rethink the traditional sources and the notion of ideological boundaries (Lundhaug and Jenott 2015). In addition to the late fourth-century codices themselves, a series of monastic documentary texts have emerged among the cartonnage, papyrus documents used to stiffen the leather covers. These texts, whether Pachomian or not, offer valuable insight into monastic practice in the area in the early years of the Pachomian movement and perhaps from the time of Pachomius himself (Laundhaig and Jenott 2015: 104–45; Goehring 2001: 243–48).

In the end, it remains notoriously difficult to unravel Pachomius from the surviving sources. The archeology is limited and difficult to interpret, and the literary accounts emerged as edifying stories, designed to further the religious and ascetic practice of the community as it was then understood, after Pachomius' death and beyond. The latter tend to idealise the past, conforming it to the present so as to undergird and support current structures and beliefs. The story was shaped by what the authors chose to tell and how they chose to tell it, as well as by what they chose to ignore or leave out. The making of a saint necessarily constrains the available evidence. The historian must learn to read behind the lines and against the grain. Episodes that seem out of place or incongruous in the later tradition offer, in particular, suggestive alternatives to the traditional storyline. Such elements allow one to reach behind the idealised portrait to imagine the complexity of the historical moment. The picture that emerges, albeit constructed with its own degree of uncertainty, offers a necessary counterweight to the ideologically crafted image of the saint.

Pachomius and his monasteries

The account of Pachomius prior to his entry into the monastic life quickly illustrates the difficulty in unravelling history from hagiography. According to the vita tradition, Pachomius was born into a pagan family where, as a child, his mere presence disturbed the pagan gods much to his parents' distress. As a young man, he was forcefully conscripted into the army during the reign of Constantine I and held in a prison with his fellow recruits. There he was befriended by Christians who distributed food and, as a result, he prayed to God promising to serve him if he were freed. Upon his eventual release, he fulfilled his promise and became a monk (SBo 3–10; G1.2–6). While the miraculous recognition of the pagan child Pachomius by the demons as a future enemy clearly participates in the typical elaboration of a saint's origins, the foundation of the entire account suffers under the fact that both Pachomius' elder brother and sister have Christian names, respectively John and Mary (SBo 19, 27; G1.14), a rather odd choice in a fully non-Christian family. While not necessarily negating all of the story's details, it underscores the problem. Where and how the modern historian draws the line in the process of extracting history from legend determines the history that is told. The following account aims to capture the basic elements of Pachomius' life apart from his later elaboration as a saint.

Pachomius was born *c.* 292 CE in the Upper Egyptian diocese of Sne (Latopolis; see Figure 52.3) (SBo 3). While the tradition indicates that his family worshipped pagan gods, the fact that his siblings have biblical names, as noted above, leaves one suspicious with regard to the account of his early childhood and conversion.[1] If his later use of a cryptic alphabetic code in his letters reflects an Egyptian mentality born out of the culture's use of hieroglyphs as some suggest (Quecke 1975: 34–35), it might reflect a close connection to a non-Christian past. Whatever the case may be with respect to his parents' beliefs, judging from the role education and books played in his later ascetic career, one suspects they belonged to the literate class and had their son educated in some fashion (G1.9, 59; SBo 15; *Praecepta* 139–40, 82, 100–101; *Praecepta et Instituta* 2). In his early twenties, Pachomius served as a soldier, perhaps unwillingly, in the war between Maximinus Daia and Licinius (313 CE; SBo 7; G1.4). Soon after his release, possibly influenced by experiences he had during his military service, he decided to become a monk. Among the various monastic options available to him in the area at that time, he elected to join a small anchoritic community situated in the fertile valley beside the village of Šeneset led by an old monk named Palamon (SBo 10; G1.6).

After training under Palamon for seven years, Pachomius set out with his brother to establish their own anchoritic community in the nearby deserted village of Tabennisi (S1.3; SBo 17; G1.12). As the community grew, Pachomius began to envision and sought to impose a more organised structure. While the tradition presents this shift as the origin of coenobitic monasticism, one imagines that Pachomius' innovation reflects rather his successful harnessing of a more general process occurring in monasteries at this time. In seems clear that Pachomius' efforts did not occur overnight, neither were they put in place without opposition. While the precise nature of his initial difficulties remains unclear, an early Sahidic version of the *Life* reports arguments between Pachomius and his brother, and describes an initial group of disciples who belittled and took advantage of him, who he eventually expelled (S1.3–4). Only then, after this initial failure, do the sources report the arrival of his first disciples and the beginning of the successful coenobitic experiment (SBo 22–24; G1.23–26).

As his community grew, so did his experiment with its organisation (SBo 26; G1.28). The achievement of the latter in meeting the needs of the monks fostered the community's growth and continuing success over time. The initial expansion towards a federation of independent monasteries occurred with the founding of a sister monastery for women (SBo 27; G1.32). Its creation initiated the need for inter-community organisation and control. The appointment of an elder monk from Tabennisi as its father effectively tied it to the home community, as did a written list of shared organisational principles or rules. It is in this period at Tabennisi that Theodore, who would ultimately succeed Pachomius as head of the federation, joined the movement. When he learned of Pachomius

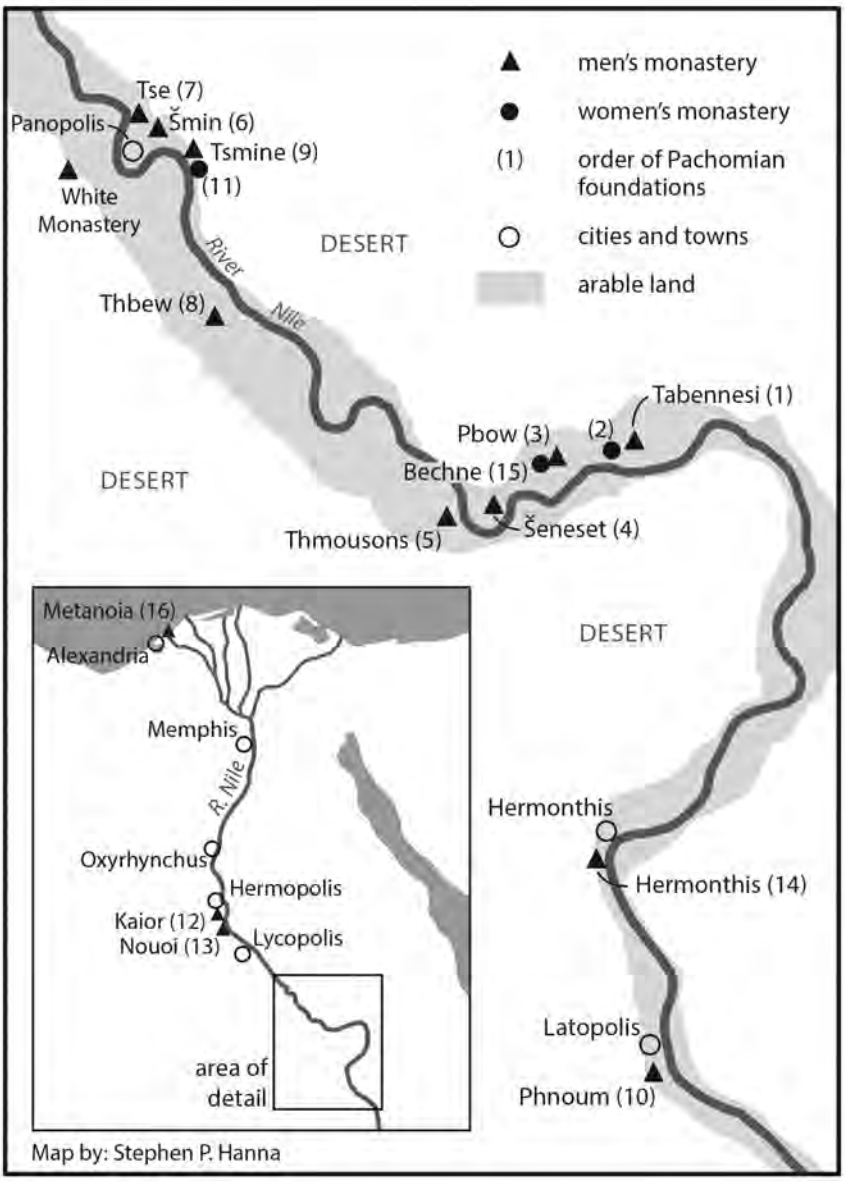

Figure 52.3 Map of the Pachomian monasteries, including their order of entry into the federation based on their appearance in the vita tradition. Created by Stephen Hanna and used with his permission

from a fellow monk in his monastery in the diocese of Sne, he decided to leave and join the new movement in Tabennisi (SBo 29–30; G1.34–35). His abilities led to his rapid advancement in the Pachomian movement.

From its initial centre in Tabennisi, the Pachomian federation expanded northward in stages. When the numbers became too great at Tabennisi, the brothers built a second male community a short distance down the Nile in the deserted village of Pbow. It was destined to become the central governing monastery of the federation (SBo 49; G1.54). As word of the movement's success spread, three existing monastic communities, Šeneset led by Apa Ebonh, Thmoušons led by Apa Jonas, and Thbew led by Petronius, petitioned and joined the federation, each in sequence extending its reach

further down the Nile towards Alexandria (SBo 50–51, 56; G1.54, 80). In the following years, the federation, with the support of the local bishop, added the monasteries of Šmin, Tse and Tsmine, creating a second northern cluster of monasteries around the city of Šmin (Panopolis; SBo 52, 57; G1.81, 83). Their proximity to one another and shared distance from the federation's earlier cluster of monasteries centred at Pbow led Pachomius to place them under the care of a single father. Pachomius also added a women's monastery at Tsmine (G1.134). The final addition to the federation, the community of Phnoum, broke the pattern of northward expansion (SBo 58; G1.83). Constructed in the diocese of Sne (Latopolis) south of Pbow, it may represent the draw of Pachomius' and Theodore's place of origin. Each community that entered the federation, either through petition or as a new foundation, agreed to follow the federation's rules and organisational principles.

Pachomian monasticism, like most forms of Christian asceticism in Egypt, drew heavily on scripture (Ruppert 1971: 128–58; Rousseau 1985: 100–1). Scripture served as the principle sourcebook for monastic practice (SBo 63; G1.68). The federation encouraged the ability to recite sizeable portions of it by heart (SBo 15; G1.9; *Precepts* 139; *Regulations of Horsiesius* 16–17), which required literate monks. New recruits were expected to begin by memorising twenty psalms or two of Paul's letters, and if they were illiterate, they were taught to read (*Precepts* 139), a requirement that suggests some form of monastic school, though such is never specifically spelled out. The power of scripture in shaping Pachomian monasticism is particularly evident in the later letters of Horsiesius, where the language of scripture has become so integrated into the author's thought that he simply expresses his ideas through it (Goehring 1999: 225–26)

In their final form, Pachomian monasteries were well-organised, self-sufficient communities connected through the central monastery of Pbow and fully integrated into the surrounding economy (Rousseau 1985: 149–73; Goehring 1999: 105–9). Each monastery had its own superior or head, occasionally referred to as the steward (*oikonomos*), as well as a second (*deuteros*) who served under him and ran the monastery in his absence (Ruppert 1971: 282–328; Harmless 2004: 125–26). Within the monastery the monks were lodged in group houses, each overseen by a housemaster and his second who answered to the superior of the monastery. Jerome reports that each house held about forty monks, each with his own cell within the house (*Preface* 2). In the central monastery of Pbow at least, one house was dedicated to foreign monks (Greek and Latin speakers), for whom translators were required (SBo 89–91; G1.95; Jerome, *Preface* 1). The leadership presented a well-organised chain of command from the general superior of the federation at Pbow down through the individual monks in the various monasteries (Rousseau 1985: 105–18).

In terms of their physical structure, each monastery was separated from the surrounding world by a wall. Access in and out of the monastery was controlled at a gatehouse. It was there that visitors and monks were first met and, if they wished to stay overnight, housed in a guesthouse outside the wall. Inside the monastery, in addition to the monastic houses or dormitories, one could find a kitchen, a dining hall, an assembly hall (*synaxis*), a church, an infirmary and a bakery (Harmless 2004: 125). The frequent mention of books raises the possibility of a library and scriptorium developing at some point in the tradition (Rousseau 1985: 81). As numbers grew, buildings were enlarged and/or replaced, a fact documented in the archeological excavations of the federation's basilica at Pbow (Grossmann 1991, 2002).

While reference to the variety of skilled craftsmen among the monks stems from later accounts (Palladius, *HL* 32.9–12: Jerome, *Preface* 6), there is no reason to doubt the claim, given the federation's draw and the origin of its leadership from the educated classes. The requirement that monks be able to read would have necessitated some form of school with teachers. The production of books would have required scribes, and the construction of the physical plant would have involved various craftsmen. One imagines the need of cooks, bakers, stonemasons, metalworkers and shoemakers. The existence of the latter in monastic circles is evident in the engraved graffito portrait of a monk from Wadi Sheikh Ali with the caption, 'I am John, the shoemaker' (see Figure 52.4). Tailors and tanners would have been required as well to fashion the distinctive garb of the Pachomian monk,

Figure 52.4 Engraved graffito portrait of a monk from Wadi Sheikh Ali with the caption, 'I am John, the shoemaker'. Photo James E. Goehring

and traders would have negotiated financial dealings with the surrounding world. The monasteries, strung out along the Nile, eventually possessed and even built boats to facilitate travel both among the monasteries of the federation and eventually for trips to and from Alexandria (see, for example SBo 96; G1.113, 146; Jerome, *Precepts* 118; Goehring 1999: 95–96).

Pachomian monks wore a distinctive uniform. According to the rule, it included a linen tunic (*lebiton*), scarf, goatskin cloak (*melote*), hood, belt and staff (Harmless 2004: 127; Jerome, *Praecepta* 81). Daily life involved the individual reciting of scripture in one's cell, communal gatherings for prayer both in the assembly hall and in the individual houses, two meals in the refectory, and individual work assignments within the monastery or outside in the fields, and catecheses or instructions delivered by the monastery's head or superior (Harmless 2004: 127–30; Rousseau 1985: 77–86). The monks from the various monasteries gathered together at Pbow twice each year, once at Easter when catechumens were baptised, and again in August for a general financial reckoning (SBo 71; G1.83).

The detailed organisation of the federation found in the vita tradition and rules represents the Pachomian movement in its completed form. Judging from the difficulties in the movement's early years, however, one must assume that the organisational structure and detailed regulations developed over time, and given the nature of the sources, we are left in the dark with respect to the details of that process. Even if one could determine, for example, which collection of rules translated by Jerome is the earliest and establish that it dates back to the time of Pachomius, it remains impossible to unravel the order in which rules were added in his lifetime. Moreover, how such rules were imagined and used within the federation over time, let alone within its individual monasteries, remains uncertain. One cannot assume, based on the use of monastic rules later in the Christian tradition, that the Pachomian federation employed them in the same way. In similar fashion, the vita tradition, which arose after Pachomius' and Theodore's deaths, aims at edification and as such generally presents the organisational structure and daily practices in their completed and ideal form. Later developments clearly impacted the memory and eventual literary presentation of earlier stages in the movement's history.

There can be little doubt, however, of Pachomius' charismatic appeal and organisational abilities. The early and continuing success of the movement during his lifetime bears witness to it. While he faced some initial difficulties, once begun, his monastery, one among many in the area, attracted disciples quickly, soon outstripping the ability of the community to house and deal with the numbers. Rather than turn people away to other independent ascetic communities, Pachomius expanded by founding a second monastery. This in turn led other existing communities to join his system. Such does not happen apart from the organisational abilities, forward thinking and charisma of the leader. Pachomius clearly met the needs of those who joined his community, developing in the process an ever expanding, devoted following.

Over time, Pachomius' success came to the attention of the ecclesiastical authorities in the area and raised questions with respect to the relationship of his authority to theirs. As one might expect, opinions varied. The vita tradition, in fact, confirms it. Various stories illustrate the new movement's mixed relationship with church authorities. While the bishop of Šmin, for example, invited Pachomius to establish a monastery in his diocese (SBo 54; G1.81), the bishop of Sne gathered a large crowd in an effort to drive him and his monks away when he sought to found a monastery there (SBo 58). The opposition seems to have endured, as the Greek tradition reports an appearance of Pachomius before a gathering of monks and bishops in the church in Sne a year before his death to answer charges of being clairvoyant. The account records an attempt made there on his life, after which he escaped back to the federation's nearby monastery of Phnoum (G1.112). Whatever lay behind these two very different reactions to the Pachomian movement, it seems apparent that the movement, whether willingly or not, was caught up in its early years in the church's efforts to extend its authority and control into and over the ascetic movement (Brakke 1995: 111–38). The impact of this effort is evident in the Pachomian sources. Pachomius, whose personal authority controlled the federation, never ventured beyond it. He did not journey to meet with Antony or Athanasius, and when he learned of Athanasius' plan to ordain him on his visit to the Thebaid, he went into hiding. His successor Theodore, on the other hand, cemented the federation's relationship with the church. Gone are the conflicts that survive in accounts of Pachomius, and in their place one reads of trips to Alexandria and meetings with Antony and the archbishop (Goehring 1999: 166–79). None of this is to deny the early pull of Alexandria on the federation or any direct opposition to its authority in general. It simply suggests that the aligning of the two independent centres of authority was a work in process.

The federation attracted members representing a broad cross-section of Roman society. The upper leadership, where one can tell, came from the literate class, either entering with leadership experience or gaining it within the movement. Petronius, for example, whom Pachomius placed in charge of the federation's northern cluster of monasteries around Šmin, came from a well-to-do family, had founded his own monastery and brought considerable wealth into the federation in the form of livestock, gear and boats (SBo 56; G1.80). Theodore, who became Pachomius' favourite, likewise came from a family of note (SBo 30; G1.33), and the surviving letters and *Testament* of Horsiesius, who eventually succeeded Theodore, likewise point to his literate origins.

The draw of the federation reached already in Pachomius' day to Alexandria. In addition to attracting native Coptic speakers, it drew Greek and Latin speakers, many from the city. The numbers required a special house for foreigners at Pbow with the requisite translators to facilitate their integration into the community (SBo 89; G1.95). Such connections undoubtedly influenced the movement, perhaps even nurturing the development of the federation's impressive literary dossier (Goehring, forthcoming 2). Together with an assumed parallel draw of native Copts from throughout Egypt, the monasteries of the federation became a 'melting pot' of ideas, languages and dialects within Egypt.

Events in the last few years of Pachomius' life unravelled plans for an orderly transition in leadership after his death and underscored his role in holding the federation together. Theodore, who had joined the movement in its early stages, had become Pachomius' favourite and heir apparent

through the years. An influential group of older brothers and monastery superiors came to recognise his status and ability, and supported him, if quietly, as Pachomius' heir apparent. In the end, however, Theodore's ambition, albeit played down in the sources, proved his undoing, which in turn unleashed a crisis within the federation following Pachomius' death. When the latter took ill two years before his eventual death in 346 CE, a group of older brothers obtained Theodore's promise to succeed Pachomius as the head of the federation. The move, however, was premature. Pachomius recovered, learned of the plan and Theodore's involvement in it, and stripped him of any authority within the federation (SBo 94; G1.106). Theodore accepted the penance imposed upon him, but two years later, as Pachomius lay dying from the plague that ravished the federation, he named Petronius, who headed the northern cluster of monasteries, as his successor (SBo 121; G1.114). Pachomius died on 9 May (14 Pašons) and was buried the following day at the mountain, which equates to a desert cemetery situated up against the escarpment. That night, following a death bed instruction from Pachomius, Theodore took three trusted brothers, removed the body, and reinterred it at a secret location, presumably lest the site become a shrine (SBo 123; G1.116).

The federation after Pachomius

The choice of Petronius to succeed Pachomius as head of the federation proved unfortunate. He was already ill from the same plague when he moved to Pbow to assume his new leadership position and died shortly thereafter.[2] On his deathbed he again passed over Theodore and appointed Horsiesius as his successor (SBo 124, 130; G1.117). Horsiesius, who first appears in the vita tradition in connection with Pachomius' illness and death, came the from the federation's monastery of Šeneset. Judging from his later writings, he, like Theodore and Petronius, represented the learned ranks from which the Pachomian leadership drew, though his absence from accounts prior to Pachomius' death raises questions with respect to the nature of his selection. While the tradition indicates that he had Theodore's support, others within the federation rejected him. Led by Apollonios, the head of the monastery of Thmoušons, the opposition rallied around cries of 'We will have nothing to do with Horsiesius nor will we have anything to do with the rules he lays down' (SBo 139), and 'We no longer belong to the *Koinonia* of the brothers' (G1.127). As the federation began to break apart, Horsiesius recognised the problem, resigned and appointed Theodore as his replacement to head the federation (*c.* 350 CE; SBo 139–40; G1.129–30). Given the fact that the older brothers had supported Theodore from the start, having convinced him to accept the role even before Pachomius' death, one cannot help but see the ensuing events as a power struggle that they eventually won.

Theodore moved quickly to reintegrate the monasteries into the federation and develop procedures designed to avoid similar crises in the future. He called the leaders of the monasteries together at Pbow, challenged their actions against Horsiesius and visited their communities in their absence (SBo 142–43). Upon his return he rotated the leaders among the various monasteries so as to disengage them from the independent bases of power they held in their original communities. To keep them from generating an independent base of support in their new monasteries, he introduced a policy of rotating them among the federation's monasteries twice each year (SBo 144). One sees in Theodore's efforts the work of an able administrator, one who fashioned rules designed to centralise authority within the federation at Pbow. While Pachomius' charismatic ability had formed and held the federation together in its first generation, its sudden withdrawal had led to the reemergence of centrifugal forces that threatened his creation. Theodore served as the transitional link, translating Pachomius' charisma into a more prescribed form that guaranteed the survival of the institution (Goehring 1999: 166–79).

Theodore clearly proved to be an effective leader. Not only did he hold Pachomius' federation together, but he continued its expansion. He founded the monasteries of Kaior and Oui near Hermopolis further north towards Alexandria, another near Hermonthis midway between Pbow and Phnoum, and the federation's second monastery for women, called Bechne, near Pbow (G1.134).

His efforts furthered the movement's reach and prestige, increasing its economic and political power both locally and beyond. Such success is evident, if somewhat submerged beneath a hagiographical veneer, in the account of Theodore's distress over the federation's expanding wealth (SBo 197–98; G1.146). At the same time, Theodore reflects the federation's growing connection to Alexandria and its authority. His trips to Alexandria (SBo 96, 124; G1.109, 120), meetings with and support of Athanasius and Antony (SBo 96, 126–34, 185, 200–203; G1.113, 120, 136–7, 143–44), and reading of the archbishop's festal letter (SBo 189), whether in every case factual or not, demonstrate the tradition's association of Theodore with the movement's growing alignment with the Alexandrian church and submersion in the broader unifying discourse of Coptic Christianity.

Another disease struck the federation during Passover in 368 CE, during which Theodore fell ill. He summoned Horsiesius back from Šeneset and presented him to the brothers as his successor. The disease progressed rapidly and Theodore died after a few days on 27 April (2 Pašons). Like Pachomius, he was buried by the brothers in the cemetery and later that night removed and reinterred alongside Pachomius at the latter's presumably secret burial site (SBo 205–7; G1.147–48). The vita tradition ends with Horsiesius' return as head of the federation, this time with the acceptance of the brothers. The writings attributed to Horsiesius, which include fragments of seven instructions, four letters, a lengthy, complete testament, and a series of rules (Veilleux 1982: 7–9, 135–224; 1981: 11–12, 197–223), support his stature as a learned and successful head of the federation.

It is worth noting that it is in the later period under Theodore and Horsiesius that the vita tradition, from which one derives the most information on Pachomius and the history of his movement, first emerges. At which point and in what form or forms remains a subject of some dispute (Goehring 1986: 3–23). What is clear, however, is that the memory and portrayal of the movement's early years has been shaped to conform to the ideals as understood in the period of the vita's composition, and then continually reformulated as the stories and various versions of the *Life* were edited over time.

The end of Pachomian monasticism

With the end of the vita tradition's accounts, chronological information on the Pachomian federation and its development diminishes fairly dramatically. While the writings of Horsiesius supply considerable information on the man and his times (Bacht 1972), they are less forthcoming, as one would expect, with respect to chronological details. Evidence does indicate the continued strengthening of ties with the Alexandria ecclesiastical hierarchy. A letter from the archbishop Theophilus to Horsiesius includes a request that the latter bring a copy of the *Life of Pachomius and Theodore* with him when he comes to Alexandria (Lefort 1943: 389–99). The establishment of the Pachomian foundation of Metanoia in the Alexandrian suburb of Canopus likewise dates to Theophilus' reign (Gascou 1991). It may account for the archbishop's request for a copy of the *Life*, and likely supplied the copy of the *Rules* that Jerome translated (*Preface* 1).

After Horsiesius' death sometime after 387 CE, access to the Pachomian federation, its monastic practice and chronological history becomes increasingly difficult as the few surviving accounts centre on specific events or crises, which serve primarily hagiographic and/or ideological concerns. While the names of five later leaders or archimandrites of the federation survive, only the accounts of Victor and Abraham expand much beyond the name (Goehring 2012: 42). According to the Coptic sources, Victor, who led the federation in the mid fifth century, corresponded with Cyril of Alexandria and accompanied the archbishop to the Council of Ephesus in 431 (Kraatz 1904; Goehring 2012: 52–53). He is also connected with the construction of the great fifth-century basilica at Pbow, remains of which are still visible on the surface today (Van Lantshoot 1934). The sheer size of this basilica (75 x 37 metres) and the apparent support the Pachomians received from the archbishop for its construction, underscore the federation's continuing strength and growing political muscle during the course of the fifth century (Goehring 2012: 60–61).

The Pachomian federation experienced a final crisis in the reign of the Byzantine emperor Justinian I (527–565 CE). Evidence for this period, heavily shaped by hagiographic concerns, depends on a series of late Coptic panegyrics centred on Abraham of Farshut, the federation's archimandrite at Pbow (Goehring 2012). The location of the Pachomian monastery of Metanoia in a suburb of Alexandria had facilitated ties to the ecclesiastical office of the archbishop. In the aftermath of the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE), Metanoia appears to have contained a strong pro-Chalcedonian component. Over the course of the fifth and sixth centuries, three Chalcedonian patriarchs were drawn from its members (Goehring 2012: 52). The federation's Lower Egyptian monastery thus served as a logical stepping stone in Justinian I's efforts to establish religious unity throughout the empire on the basis of the Chalcedonian creed. At the same time, however, the Upper Egyptian elements of the federation centred at Pbow remained staunchly non-Chalcedonian. As a result, certain pro-Chalcedonian elements within Metanoia brought charges against the Upper Egyptian archimandrite Abraham. With the support of the emperor, they effected his removal and replacement by one of their own, the pro-Chalcedonian monk Pancharis. Abraham fled to Shenoute's federation and then on to found a monastery of his own at Farshut. As the non-Chalcedonian monks left, the Pachomian federation became a pro-Chalcedonian movement in an increasingly anti-Chalcedonian Egypt. As a result, one hears little about its fate after Abraham. For all practical purposes Pachomian monasticism came to an end. As the subsequent discourse of Coptic Christianity took shape, the early history of the Pachomian movement folded naturally into the later developments of Shenoute and his White Monastery federation, which came to represent the continuing coenobitic tradition in Egypt (Goehring 2012: 50–67).

General observations

Any account of Pachomius and his monastic movement must take care not to fold its origins and subsequent history into a general account of desert monasticism. His movement represents rather a form of village or urban asceticism. He began his ascetic career as an anchorite under the old ascetic Palamon, who inhabited an inarable patch of land beside the village of Šeneset well within the Nile's fertile valley. When he departed to found his first monastery, he chose to locate it in the deserted village of Tabennisi, which sat alongside the river. Evidence suggests that the pattern continued as the federation expanded. Pbow, the second foundation and eventual headquarters of the federation was again located in a deserted village in the fertile valley. Subsequent monasteries were likewise located within or near villages and towns (Goehring 1996). The Pachomian federation did not withdraw and isolate itself from the world, but rather situated its communities in its midst and interacted with it. The tradition, for example, indicates that people returned to the village of Tabennisi after Pachomius established his first monastery there, which led the brothers to build a church for them even before constructing one of their own (SBo 25; G1.29). It is important to keep this in mind as one reimagines Pachomius' life and the history of his movement.

One must likewise remember that accounts of Pachomius rely on sources which, for the most part, were produced and edited within and beyond his community after his death. Memory over time conforms the life of its chosen saint to the expectations and needs of a changing community. The historical processes whereby the community developed into its later form are collapsed into the creative genius of its founder. Pachomius' participation in a broader process of increasing monastic communal organisation, as well as the awkward early stages of his own efforts, are collapsed by the tradition into a visionary moment that inaugurates the coenobitic experiment (SBo 17; G1.12). In a similar way, Palladius collapses the development of the Pachomian Rule into a momentary encounter with an angel, who gives it to Pachomius on an engraved bronze tablet (*Historia Lausiaca* 32.1). While Palladius' fashioning of Pachomius as the Moses of monasticism clearly moves from history into hagiography, it simply represents the predictable end of a process already evident in the Pachomian sources. By projecting later forms of the movement back into

the life of the saint, the sources naturalise their own authors' and editors' understanding of the monastic enterprise. The reconstruction of Pachomius' life must therefore proceed with extreme caution. The historian must learn to employ tools similar to those developed in the quest for the historical Jesus. She must read between the lines, imagine the processes that lay behind the collapsed form that appears in the sources, and consider what later authors may have left out of the account. The effort is fraught with difficulty and uncertainty, but such is the only path available back to the historical Pachomius.

Finally, it is essential to consider the integration of the movement's identity with that of the Alexandrian patriarchate over time and the impact such integration had on the production of its early history. Pachomius' charismatic ability drew and held the federation together. His independent base of authority led to his avoidance of Athanasius and created tension with certain local bishops. One finds little evidence of such tensions in the later periods of Theodore and Horsiesius, indicative of the growing comfort level between the two spheres of authority. While there can be little doubt of the movement's orientation towards Alexandria from the start, illustrated by the pattern of its expansion and the early presence of Alexandria monks in its monasteries, the shifting pattern coincides with the patriarchate's efforts to integrate the ascetic movement into its conception of the church. As such one must consider the possibility of divergent practices within the movement in its earlier stages that disappeared in later accounts of it. It is in this context that the debate over the Pachomian origin and use of the Nag Hammadi codices has swirled (Goehring 2001). While we cannot know with certainty what Pachomian monks read beyond scripture and how they interpreted it in their fourth-century context, the nature of the Pachomian sources equally deny any certainty with respect to what they did not read. Given the geographically expansive, diverse and literate nature of Pachomian monasticism, it is not hard to imagine the circulation and use of such recycled literature among certain of its monks (Lundhaug and Jenott 2015).

Notes

1 It is of course possible that the Christian names came into the tradition at a later date.
2 19 July (25 Epip) according to SBo 130, or 21 July (27 Epip) according to G1.117.

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Note: References to sections of the *Life of Pachomius* refer to the Bohairic life supplemented in Veilleux's translation (SBo) in places where it is missing by the parallel Sahidic version, the First Sahidic *Life* (S1), and the First Greek *Life* (G1). Citations from the *Rule* refer to the four series translated by Jerome: *Precepts, Precepts and Institutes, Precepts and Judgements*, and *Precepts and Laws*. The entire Pachomian dossier can be found in English translation in Armand Veilleux's three volume *Pachomian Koinonia*.

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53
ATHANASIUS

David M. Gwynn

Elected as bishop of Alexandria in 328, Athanasius led the Egyptian Church during the crucial formative years that followed the conversion of Constantine and saw the rise of an increasingly Christian Roman empire. A figure of controversy for much of his long career, Athanasius was exiled on five separate occasions by four different emperors, but by his death in 373 he was widely hailed as a champion of orthodoxy and patron of the emerging ascetic movement. For over a millennium, Christians in both east and west celebrated Athanasius for his uncompromising defence of the original Nicene Creed against the 'Arian heresy'. Yet in recent times Athanasius' reputation has once more become contested, between those who still hail him as a saint and those for whom his polemical writings and violent reputation threaten to outweigh his theological and pastoral achievements.

In any assessment of Athanasius and his legacy, it is essential to place him firmly within the historical context in which he lived and wrote (Barnes 1993; Gemeinhardt 2011; Gwynn 2012). Athanasius was born in the final decade of the third century, and was a child in 303 when the emperor Diocletian unleashed the Great Persecution upon the Church. Constantine's patronage from 312 onwards began the transformation of Christianity into the dominant religion of the empire, and Athanasius attended the Council of Nicaea in 325 as a deacon serving bishop Alexander of Alexandria. When he was chosen to succeed Alexander in 328, Athanasius was inevitably drawn into the ongoing Trinitarian theological debates usually and inaccurately known as the 'Arian Controversy' (Hanson 1988; Ayres 2004). At the same time, the increasing scale and prestige of the fourth-century Church placed new demands upon Christian bishops and shaped Athanasius' vision of his ecclesiastical and pastoral role. The ascetic movement which took root in the Egyptian desert was itself in part a reaction to the changing status of Christianity and the end of persecution, and raised a further potential threat to episcopal authority (Brown 1988; Brakke 1995). Responses to all these diverse challenges are expressed in Athanasius' numerous surviving writings, which range from theological treatises and polemics to ascetic exhortations and the homiletic *Festal Letters*. What these writings never fully reveal, however, is the inner man. Athanasius did not write an autobiographical work to compare with Augustine's *Confessions*, and perhaps it is true that he simply was not the kind of person to do so. Only the public Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria, remains accessible to us today.

An age of controversies

Alexander of Alexandria died on 17 April 328, and on 8 June Athanasius was consecrated as his successor. The two month interregnum did not bode well. Young and relatively inexperienced, Athanasius immediately had to fight to defend his position. The bishop of Alexandria was the head of the Egyptian Church and an important figure in the wider Christian community (Martin 1996; Davis 2004). But major conflicts were already raging among the Christians of Roman Egypt (see Figure 53.1) and across the eastern Mediterranean. The Melitian Schism which erupted in the

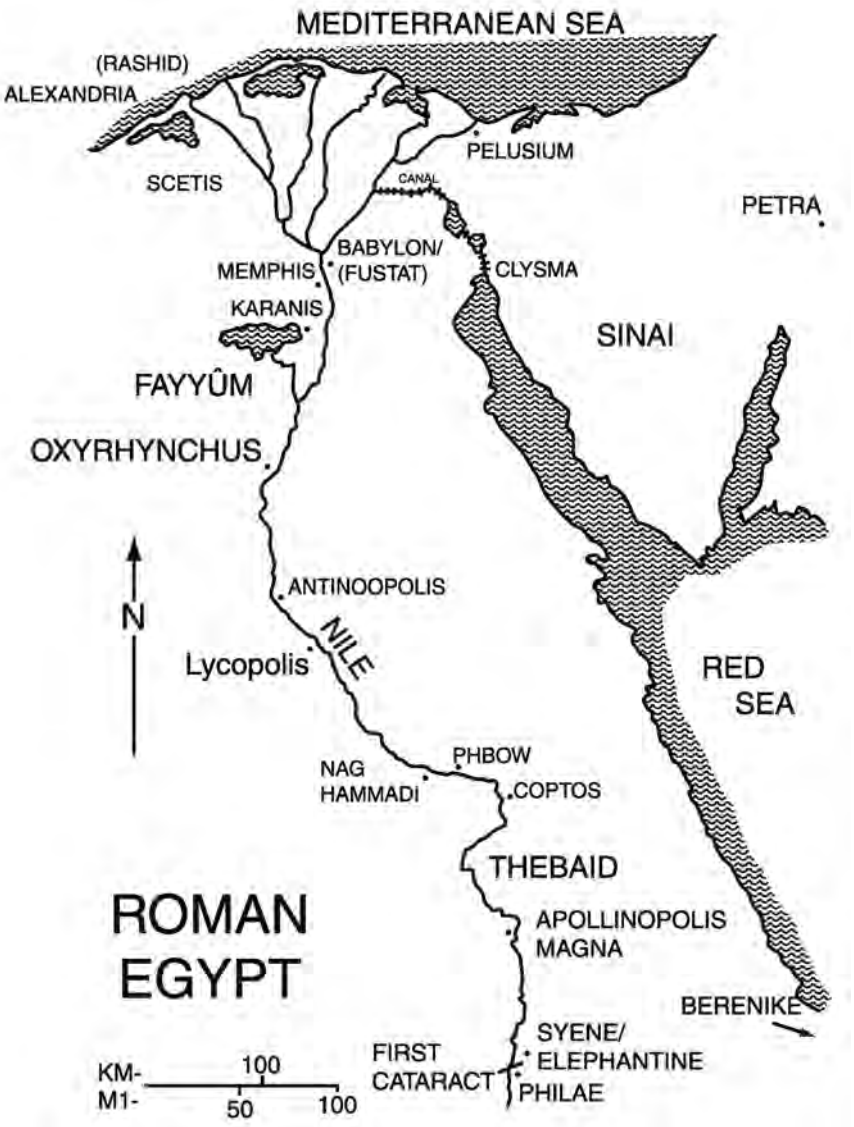

Figure 53.1 Map of Roman Egypt. Adapted from Haas (1997: 4), by permission of the Johns Hopkins University Press

aftermath of the Great Persecution created a rival Egyptian clerical hierarchy, while the theological debates over the Trinity had begun in Alexandria with Alexander's condemnation of his presbyter Arius. Athanasius would struggle for almost half a century to maintain his authority and the unity of his Church. He faced repeated periods in exile as his relationships with the reigning emperors fluctuated, and he had to outlast a number of rivals before his triumph was secure.

The Church divided: 'Melitians' and 'Arians'

The Melitian Schism formed the Egyptian parallel to the better known Donatist Schism in Roman North Africa. Bishop Melitius of Lycopolis was imprisoned in 305/6 alongside Peter of Alexandria (bishop 300–11), and denounced the relative mildness with which Peter treated those who lapsed under the strain of persecution (Vivian 1988). This rigorous attitude found supporters among the bishops of Upper Egypt, who also desired greater independence from Alexandrian hegemony, and Melitius began to organise his followers into a rival 'Church of the Martyrs' (Hauben 1998). The *Breviarium Melitii*, the list of Melitian clergy that Melitius presented to Alexander after the Council of Nicaea, records a Melitian presence all along the Nile Valley. Athanasius clashed repeatedly with the Melitians right down to the 360s, and the speed with which Melitius' message spread highlighted the challenge Athanasius would face in seeking to unite Alexandrian Christianity more closely with the rest of Egypt.

Within Alexandria itself, tensions regarding theology and clerical authority were already rising. Arius is remembered today as the chief heresiarch of the fourth century, but in our sources he first appears as the pious and ascetically minded presbyter of the Alexandrian parish church of Baucalis. A popular preacher in the intellectual tradition of Clement and Origen, Arius attracted a strong following and his teachings alarmed his bishop Alexander (Williams 2001). Arius' writings now survive merely in fragments, but he consistently upheld the unique divinity of God the Father. He did not deny that the Son was in some sense divine, but he subordinated the Son as God but not true God and neither co-eternal nor co-essential with the Father. Arius particularly feared Sabellian Modalism, which reduced the Trinity to three faces or modes and so compromised the distinct identities of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In his efforts to maintain the status of the Father and the separation between Father and Son, however, Arius went too far. If the Son was so inferior to the Father, how could He fulfil the promise of salvation through the Incarnation? This was the attitude of Alexander, who summoned a Council of Alexandria in *c.* 321 at which Arius was condemned. Yet Arius still had supporters, both inside Egypt and beyond, who recognised the traditional elements within his beliefs and welcomed an opportunity to undermine the bishop of Alexandria. It was this escalation of the controversy that led Constantine, who only conquered the eastern half of the Roman empire in 324, to summon the Council of Nicaea in May-June 325.

For Alexander, the Nicene council was a personal triumph. The pre-eminence of the Alexandrian see over the churches of Egypt and Libya received canonical approval (Nicaea, canon 6). The Melitian clergy recorded in the *Breviarium Melitii* were permitted to retain their offices, but they were declared inferior to the equivalent clergy of the majority Egyptian Church. Arius was sent into exile, his most notorious teachings anathematised, and the Nicene Creed proclaimed the Son *homoousios* (of one essence) with the Father. Later tradition awarded Athanasius a leading role in the debates, a pious fiction that reflects Athanasius' legacy as the champion of Nicaea. In truth he was a young deacon in 325, although we may assume that he listened closely and discussed the issues with bishop Alexander. Like his contemporaries, he must also have been awestruck by the splendour of the largest gathering that the Church had ever witnessed. Unfortunately for Alexander and Athanasius, their triumph at Nicaea failed to resolve the underlying problems. The attempted reconciliation with the Melitians collapsed after Alexander's death, and the rival Melitian hierarchy continued to threaten Alexandrian authority. A number of leading eastern bishops who shared Arius' fear of Sabellianism were disturbed by the Nicene Creed, particularly the unscriptural term *homoousios* which seemed to blur any clear

distinction between Father and Son. When Athanasius succeeded Alexander in 328 he inherited these ongoing tensions as he fought to establish his own ecclesiastical and doctrinal standing.

Bishop and emperor

The opening years of his episcopate were a difficult time for Athanasius and the Alexandrian see. His election was disputed, despite his status as Alexander's protégé, in part on the grounds that Athanasius may not have quite reached the minimum age of thirty expected for bishops. Athanasius' Egyptian opponents in turn gained support from elements within the wider eastern Church, notably the influential figure of Eusebius of Nicomedia who had previously supported Arius and clashed with Alexander. It was alleged that Athanasius resorted to intimidation and violence in his efforts to enforce his authority. The presbyter Macarius was said to have broken a sacred chalice in a Melitian church, while the Melitian bishop Arsenius was reported to have been murdered. A long and complex sequence of events culminated in Athanasius' condemnation at the Council of Tyre in 335 and his banishment to Gaul by order of the emperor Constantine:

> All the proceedings against me, and the fabricated stories about the breaking of the chalice and the murder of Arsenius, were for the sole purpose of introducing impiety into the Church and of preventing their being condemned as heretics.
>
> *(*Apologia contra Arianos *85)*

For the rest of his life, Athanasius consistently proclaimed his innocence of the charges on which he was condemned in 335. He was the victim of an 'Arian conspiracy', led by Eusebius of Nicomedia and those whom Athanasius branded as *hoi peri Eusebion* ('the ones around Eusebius' or 'the Eusebians', Gwynn 2007). Modern scholars have been less unanimous (for widely contrasting judgements see Arnold (1991) for the defence and Barnes (1993) for the prosecution). The accusation of murder

Figure 53.2 Constantius II, depicted in the Codex-Calendar of 354. Wikicommons

was certainly false, as Arsenius was found alive. But the charge of excessive violence receives partial confirmation from *Papyrus London* 1914, a contemporary Melitian letter written shortly before the Council of Tyre (Bell 1924: 53–71), and the council itself was a significant gathering of the eastern Church not the vehicle of a small faction. Although Athanasius returned from exile upon Constantine's death in 337, he was immediately under pressure. Imperial rule was now divided between Constantine's three surviving sons – Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans – and the new eastern emperor Constantius was in attendance when a Council of Antioch met in late 338 to reconsider Athanasius' case. Athanasius was condemned once more, and Gregory of Cappadocia appointed to replace him as bishop of Alexandria. Gregory entered the city on 22 March 339, and on 16 April Athanasius fled Egypt for Rome.

During his second exile to the west, Athanasius rallied support for his cause (Parvis 2006). The theological denunciation of his opponents as 'Arian' was developed in detail in the three *Orationes contra Arianos* (*c.* 339–46). Julius of Rome upheld his innocence in 340/1, and so did the western bishops at the divided council of Serdica in 343 (the parallel council of eastern bishops, on the other hand, renewed Athanasius' condemnation). At the same time, Athanasius worked hard to keep in contact with his Egyptian followers and counteract his rival Gregory, particularly through the annual *Festal Letters* that he continued to circulate whenever possible to announce the date of the Easter celebration. Finally, after Gregory died in 345, Constantius permitted Athanasius to return to Alexandria. Now Athanasius reaped the benefit of his labours. The joyful procession that welcomed him home on 21 October 346 stretched for miles, and was later compared by Gregory of Nazianzus (*Oration* 21.29) with Christ's entry into Jerusalem.

So began Athanasius' 'Golden Decade', the longest uninterrupted span for which he held the see of Alexandria. The *Festal Letters* from these years document Athanasius' ongoing efforts to reinforce his authority across the Egyptian Church, in a period of great theological debate and rising ascetic fervour. Yet these were also years of growing tensions between Athanasius and Constantius, who in 353 united the empire under his sole rule. Constantius sought to impose doctrinal and ecclesiastical harmony on the divided Church, and Athanasius swiftly became a primary target of that campaign. Councils in Arles (353) and Milan (355) were ordered to denounce Athanasius, although a number of western bishops including Julius' successor Liberius of Rome maintained Athanasius' innocence and were themselves sent into exile. Athanasius protested his loyalty to Constantius in the original version of his *Apologia ad Constantium*, but he could not avert the coming storm. On the night of 8/9 February 356, soldiers attacked the Church of Theonas in Alexandria where Athanasius was presiding over a vigil. Athanasius fled, to be replaced as bishop by his new rival George, who entered the city a year later in February 357.

Athanasius the Great

Many stories surround Athanasius' third exile, for despite the attack upon his church the bishop refused to abandon his homeland. There were several narrow escapes in the six years during which Athanasius hid within the houses of Alexandria and the monastic communities of the Egyptian desert. His success in evading capture reflected the loyal following that his personality and pastoral labours had inspired, and indeed the years between 356 and 362 saw Athanasius' most intensive period of literary production. The *Encyclical Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya*, the revised *Apologia ad Constantium*, the *Apologia de Fuga* and the highly polemical *Historia Arianorum* all presented Athanasius' interpretation of recent events and upheld his status as the legitimate possessor of the Alexandrian see against the 'Arian' imposter George. It was also at this time that Athanasius composed the famous *Life of Antony*, invoking the great hermit to support Athanasius' cause, and he continued to circulate his *Festal Letters* when the opportunity arose. The violent persecution of Athanasius' followers failed to break their spirit, and as an outsider George's position was never secure. In October 358 he abandoned Alexandria after nearly being killed by an angry mob, and

only returned late in 361. Then George's patron Constantius died, to be succeeded by Julian 'the Apostate' (361–3), the last pagan Roman emperor. George was imprisoned, and a month later he was lynched either by pagans or by Athanasius' supporters. Julian had proclaimed an amnesty for all bishops exiled under Constantius, and in February 362 Athanasius reclaimed his city.

Athanasius immediately summoned a Council of Alexandria in 362. His aim was twofold: to reaffirm his authority over the Egyptian Church and to promote unity among the defenders of the Nicene Creed. The *Tomus ad Antiochenos* composed at that council was addressed to the divided Antiochene Church, where the Nicene Christians were split between two factions led by Paulinus (whom Athanasius favoured) and the more popular Meletius. As an appeal for harmony, the *Tomus* was a failure. But the *Tomus* expresses both Athanasius' vision for the Church and his standing as the recognised champion of Nicene orthodoxy. Even the emperor Julian, who opposed direct persecution of Christians, made Athanasius an exception. When Athanasius went into exile once more in October 362, he is said to have remarked prophetically that Julian was merely 'a small cloud which will soon pass away' (first quoted in Rufinus, *Ecclesiastical History* 10.35). Julian's death in Persia in June 363 allowed Athanasius to make a swift return, and briefly Athanasius found an imperial ally in the short-lived emperor Jovian (363–4), to whom he wrote a letter laying down the Nicene faith (*Letter* 56). Sadly, Jovian's successor Valens (364–78) reverted to the ecclesiastical and theological programme of Constantius, and in late 365 Athanasius withdrew into his fifth and final exile. By this time, however, his position was increasingly secure. In February 366 Valens permitted Athanasius to return undisturbed, as he remained until his death on 2 May 373.

In his final years, Athanasius has been aptly described as the 'elder statesman' (Barnes 1993: 152–64) of Nicene Christianity. Challenges still remained ahead, but through his long struggles with opponents within and beyond Egypt Athanasius had transformed the status of the Alexandrian see. Although the Melitians reappear prominently in Athanasius' *Festal Letters* of the late 360s (39–42), suggesting a resurgence of the schism in Upper Egypt, the vast majority of Egyptian clergy, monks and laity were united behind Athanasius' leadership. And while the three Cappadocian Fathers now led the theological defence of Nicene orthodoxy, their admiration for Athanasius is reflected in the tone of Basil of Caesarea's letters to the Alexandrian (e.g. *Letters* 69, 80 and 82) and in Gregory of Nazianzus' *Oration* 21: *On the Great Athanasius*. It was the achievements of Athanasius that laid the foundation upon which his successors Theophilus (385–412) and Cyril (412–44) would build. The Egyptian Coptic Church remembered Athanasius as their second founder (Davis 2004), and the seventh-century Coptic chronicler John of Nikiu depicted the bishop as a spiritual saviour preserving Alexandria from the tsunami of 365:

> The venerable father accompanied by all the priests went forth to the borders of the sea, and holding in his hand the book of the holy Law he raised his hand to heaven and said 'O Lord, Thou God who liest not, it is Thou that didst promise to Noah after the flood and say: "I will not again bring a flood of waters upon the earth"'. And after these words of the saint the sea returned to its place and the wrath of God was appeased. Thus the city was saved through the intercession of the apostolic Saint Athanasius, the great star.
>
> *(John of Nikiu,* Chronicle *82.22–3)*

Ascetic champion and pastoral father

While Athanasius was a leading player outside Egypt in imperial and ecclesiastical affairs, he remained at all times the bishop of Alexandria and the head of the Egyptian Church. The privileges that Constantine granted to Christianity from 312 onwards transformed the social status of the clergy and the role of bishops in civic and provincial life. Expanding Christian congregations required instruction and pastoral guidance, while in cities and desert alike the rising ascetic movement flourished.

Asceticism offered an expression of faith that attracted devout Christians, but such holy men and women represented a potential challenge to both episcopal authority and the unity of the Christian community that Athanasius could not ignore.

City and country

From its foundation by Alexander the Great, the city of Alexandria had always been a melting pot of diverse cultures and religions. By the fourth century, a large but divided Christian population lived alongside pagans and Jews in uneasy peace that could quickly explode into violence (Haas 1997). Despite his years in exile, Athanasius maintained and increased episcopal standing in the city. Control over the charitable distribution of bread and oil offered an important means of patronage in a society with extreme contrasts of rich and poor (Brown 2002), and that control had to be defended against rival bishops like Gregory and George. At the same time, the physical topography of Alexandria was reshaped by Christianity's increasing wealth and prestige. The Church of Theonas just inside the western gate, in which Athanasius initially presided and where he was attacked in February 356, was enlarged and ornamented. The Caesarion, the imperial cult temple on the harbour in the city centre, was converted during Constantius' reign into the new cathedral. Work was not quite completed when Athanasius used the church to celebrate Easter in *c.* 351, an action he justified to Constantius by citing the enormous multitude who assembled for the feast (*Apologia ad Constantium* 14–18). By the end of his episcopate Athanasius had firmly established the bishop's pre-eminence within the city, paving the way for the more aggressive policies of Theophilus and Cyril.

Athanasius was no less concerned to preserve Alexandrian authority over the wider Church of Egypt and Libya. Following his accession he travelled widely, touring the Thebaid in 329–30 (*Festal Index* 2) and Pentapolis and Ammoniaca in 331–2 (*Festal Index* 4). The devoted following that he inspired would later prove crucial, particularly when he remained in concealment between

Figure 53.3 Map of Alexandria. Athanasius' headquarters, the Church of Theonas, lay near the western gate. Adapted from Haas (1997: 2), by permission of the Johns Hopkins University Press

356 and 362. Throughout his episcopate, Athanasius kept communication with the scattered congregations of his region by means of the annual *Festal Letters* that delivered his Easter message to his churches. No authentic sermons of Athanasius survive, and these *Letters* are essential to our knowledge of his pastoral activities (Camplani 1989; Ng 2001; Gwynn 2012: 131–57). He wrote even from exile when circumstances allowed, and through the *Letters* reaffirmed his own position and promoted his theological and moral principles. The conclusion to the first *Festal Letter*, the earliest work composed by Athanasius as bishop of Alexandria, encapsulates his message:

> Let us remember the poor, and not forget kindness to strangers; above all, let us love God with all our soul and might and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves. So may we receive those things which the eye has not seen nor the ear heard, and which have not entered into the heart of man, which God has prepared for those that love Him through His only Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; through Whom, to the Father alone, by the Holy Spirit, be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen. Salute one another with a kiss. All the brethren who are with me salute you.
>
> *(*Festal Letter *1.11)*

The *Festal Letters* also attest to Athanasius' ongoing efforts to unite the Egyptian clergy. The schismatic Melitian hierarchy threatened his authority, as did the appointment of bishops by Gregory and George during Athanasius' periods in exile. Athanasius wrote to his friend Serapion of Thmuis from the west in *c.* 337 or *c.* 339/40 (the letter is incorrectly preserved as *Festal Letter* 12) asking him to circulate an enclosed Easter message which included a list of approved appointments to vacant Egyptian sees. After Athanasius returned to Alexandria in 346, *Festal Letter* 19 for Easter 347 likewise ended with the postscript: 'I have thought it necessary to inform you of the appointment of bishops, which has taken place in the stead of our blessed fellow-ministers, that you may know to whom to write, and from whom you should receive letters' (*Festal Letter* 19.10). He then listed the bishops appointed to sixteen sees, several of whom appear to be former Melitians now 'reconciled to the Church' (one such figure was Arsenius of Hypsele, the Melitian cleric involved in the

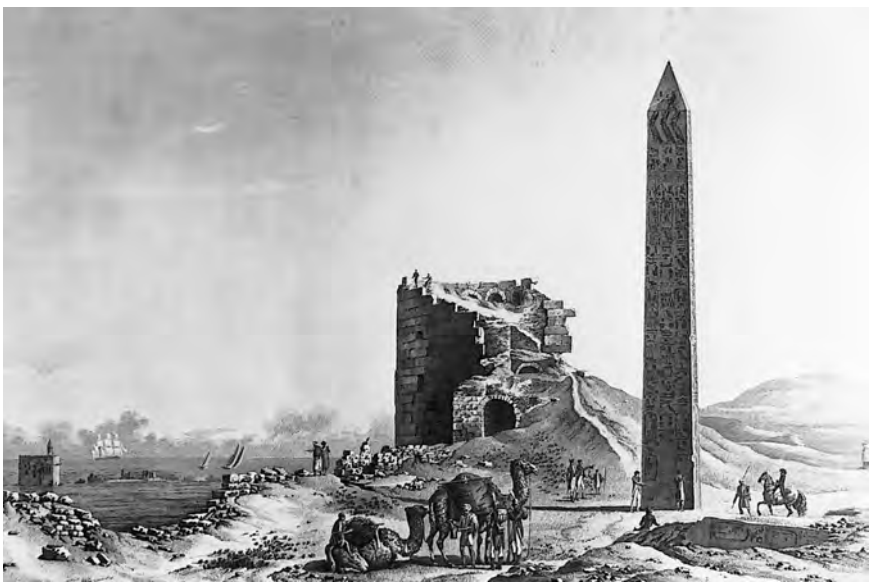

Figure 53.4 The Caesarion in Alexandria at the turn of the nineteenth century. From the Napoleonic Description de l'Égypte, Paris, 1808–28

charges against Athanasius at the Council of Tyre). A similar list of appointments appears at the end of *Festal Letter* 40 (368), in which Athanasius criticises irregular ordinations of priests and bishops in Upper Egypt. By using his *Festal Letters* to assert his right to confirm episcopal appointments, Athanasius encouraged the loyalty of his chosen candidates and made a powerful statement of his leadership over a unified catholic Church.

The ascetic revolution

> In our generation in Egypt I see three chapter-heads given increase by God for profit of all who understand – the bishop Athanasius, Christ's champion for the Faith even unto death; and the holy Abba Antony, perfect pattern of the anchoretic life; and this Community, which is the type for all who desire to gather souls according to God, to take care of them until they be made perfect.
>
> *(Pachomius, quoted in the* Vita Prima Pachomii *136)*

Athanasius' lifetime witnessed the dawn of Christian asceticism's golden age. As the threat of persecution faded in Egypt and elsewhere, men and women seeking a deeper religious commitment expressed their faith through an ascetic lifestyle of austerity and self-discipline. The eremitic monasticism of the solitary hermit was exemplified by the Egyptian monk Antony (*c.* 251–356), while collective cenobitic monasticism was originally associated in Egypt with Antony's younger contemporary Pachomius (292–346). The *Life of Antony* was Athanasius' most influential work, proclaiming his admiration for the older monk while constructing a particular interpretation of how Antony's words and deeds should be remembered. Athanasius likewise had close associations with Pachomian monasticism, although he did not apparently meet Pachomius himself, and he wrote to numerous other ascetics including the *Letter to Amoun* (concerning bodily emissions and the respective value of marriage and celibacy) and several letters to virgins (Brakke 1995). Not all the ascetic works preserved in Athanasius' name are authentic (Brakke 1994), but the very existence of a number of pseudo-Athanasian writings confirms the reputation Athanasius held among later generations of ascetics.

The rise of a new ascetic elite, to whom other Christians looked for guidance, offered an inspiration to greater faith but also held potential dangers for the Church. The personal charismatic authority of a holy man like Antony might undermine or supersede the ecclesiastical authority of clerical office (Rapp 2005). In the *Life*, Athanasius presented Antony as a model of ascetic humility. 'He honoured the rule of the Church with extreme care, and he wanted every cleric to be held in higher regard than himself. He felt no shame at bowing the head to the bishops and presbyters' (*Life of Antony* 67). This obedience, however, Antony reserved for representatives of the true faith and he renounced any communion with Melitians or Arians (*Life of Antony* 68–9). Athanasius further sought to unite monks and clergy by drawing ascetics into the episcopal hierarchy, even though not all monks believed that service as a bishop was compatible with their ascetic discipline (Sterk 2004). His *Letter to Dracontius* (353/4) was written to a monk, raised unwillingly to the episcopate, who had fled back to his monastery. Rebuking Dracontius for abandoning his duty and neglecting the pastoral needs of his congregation, Athanasius insisted on the righteousness of the monk-bishop and reminded Dracontius of other monks who had followed the clerical path before him. This appeal obviously succeeded. Bishop Dracontius was exiled in 356 with other supporters of Athanasius, and in 362 he joined the restored Athanasius at the Council of Alexandria.

The ascetic revolution also threatened to create division within Christianity, separating monks and virgins from the 'ordinary' laity. Athanasius constantly reminded his ascetic audiences that they must not fall into pride and hold themselves above their fellow Christians. Virginity may be superior to marriage, but marriage itself should not be degraded (*First Letter to Virgins* 18–19, *Letter to Amoun*). Simultaneously, Athanasius through his *Festal Letters* appealed to his lay congregations to embrace

ascetic practices if only for the Easter period. Ascetic commitment should not be the sole preserve of a spiritual elite. In *Festal Letter* 10 for Easter 338, Athanasius drew on Jesus' Parable of the Sower to hail the divine grace that exalted those who followed an ascetic lifestyle yet rewarded every Christian who heeded the call of their own free will and to the best of their ability:

> Not with virgins alone is such a field adorned, nor with monks alone, but also with honourable matrimony and the chastity of each one. For in sowing, He did not compel the will beyond the power. Nor is mercy confined to the perfect, but it is sent down also among those who occupy the middle and the third ranks, so that He might rescue all men generally to salvation.
>
> (Festal Letter *10.4)*

Easter fasts and the canon of scripture

In his desire to promote unity and ascetic values across the Egyptian Church, Athanasius introduced a major change into the celebration of the great festival of Easter. The traditional custom in Egypt had been to hold a six-day fast before Holy Week, and Athanasius' earliest *Festal Letters* continued to prescribe this short fast. A few years after his election, however, most probably in 334, Athanasius began a campaign to promote a 40-day Lenten fast (Brakke 2001: 457–61). His aim was both to bring Egypt into line with the wider Roman Church and to provide a longer period during which lay Christians might adopt ascetic abstinence:

> As Israel, when going up to Jerusalem, was first purified in the wilderness, being trained to forget the customs of Egypt, the Word by this typifying to us the holy fast of forty days, let us first be purified and freed from defilement, so that when we depart hence, having been careful of fasting, we may be able to ascend to the upper chamber with the Lord.
>
> (Festal Letter *6.12)*

The biblical justification cited for the 40-day fast reflects the novelty of Athanasius' reform, and he certainly faced opposition. Following his return from his second exile in 346, he condemned those who were so rash and impious that they still neglected the 40-day fast (*Festal Letter* 19.9). By the end of his episcopate he appears to have carried the argument. The 40-day Lenten fast remained a focus for Christian spirituality for laity and ascetics alike under the leadership of the bishop of Alexandria.

Festal Letter 39, for Easter 367, concerns the scriptural canon. It is the best known of Athanasius' Easter epistles, for it contains the oldest extant list of the New Testament books that corresponds with the New Testament canon in the modern Bible (Brakke 2010). But Athanasius did not write this *Festal Letter* for the benefit of scriptural historians. Definition of the accepted scriptural canon was a further statement of his authority and of his concern for his congregations. Simple believers must be instructed from the divine books and protected from being led astray by apocryphal works. Athanasius concedes that some books outside the canon might have value, including the *Wisdom of Solomon* and the popular *Shepherd of Hermas*, but other writings are to be shunned as the inventions of heretics. The inspired works alone provide all that Christian instruction requires:

> Let the teacher teach from the words of Scripture, and let him place before those who desire to learn those things that are appropriate to their age. In the case of those who begin to study as catechumens, it is not right to proclaim the obscure texts of Scripture, because they are mysteries, but instead to place before them the teaching that they need: what will teach them how to hate sin and to abandon idolatry as an abomination.
>
> (Festal Letter *39.28)*

Figure 53.5 A folio containing Matthew 6:4–32 from Codex Sinaiticus, the earliest surviving manuscript of the complete New Testament, dated to the fourth century and possibly produced in Alexandria. Wikicommons

Teaching the faithful was a fundamental clerical duty, which rapidly increasing Christian numbers in the later fourth century made ever more significant. But independent teaching encouraged diversity rather than unity, and Athanasius denounced those who questioned his interpretation of Scripture and the canon as 'Melitians' or 'Arians'. *Festal Letter* 39 is reported to have been read out and then posted in Pachomian monasteries (Bohairic *Life of Pachomius* 189), and it is possible that the famous collection of Gnostic codices discovered at Nag Hammadi were buried by nearby Pachomian monks in response to Athanasius' condemnation of non-canonical works. Here as throughout Athanasius' career, sincere pastoral concerns and issues of ecclesiastical authority were inextricably intertwined.

The Word of God

Across his long episcopal career, Athanasius' fundamental theological principles remained strikingly consistent (Pettersen 1995; Anatolios 1998, 2004; Morales 2006; Weinandy 2007). At the heart of his theology lay the salvation of humanity through the Incarnation of God's true Son and Word. Only by the sacrifice of the Son, who shared the full divinity of His Father and yet became human and died for our sake, could humanity be raised up and cross the divide that separates creation from God. This conviction shaped Athanasius' vision of the Christian life, and he opposed implacably Arius' subordination of the Son and any teaching that alienated the Son from the *ousia* (essence) of the Father. Over the course of the fourth-century Trinitarian debates, Athanasius came to see his faith embodied in the original Nicene Creed with its insistence that the Son was *homoousios* (of one essence) with the Father. The final resolution of those debates perhaps owed more to the Cappadocian Fathers, but Athanasius prepared the ground and deserved to be celebrated as the champion of Nicene orthodoxy.

'He became human that we might become divine'

Shortly after becoming bishop in 328, Athanasius began his earliest major theological work: the double treatise *Contra Gentes-De Incarnatione* (*c.* 328–35). The treatise culminated in the memorable words:

> He became human that we might become divine (*theopoiēthōmen*); and He revealed Himself through a body that we might receive an idea of the invisible Father; and He endured insults from human beings that we might inherit incorruption.
>
> (De Incarnatione *54)*

For Athanasius, salvation was achieved by the deification or divinisation of humanity through the Son. Between God and the created order existed an ontological gulf, separating the eternal unchanging Creator from His fallible and mutable creation. In order to bridge that gulf, the mediating Word and Saviour who became incarnate in Jesus Christ had to fully share in the divinity of the Godhead (Anatolios 1998). The Son therefore is not created but begotten of the same essence (*ousia*) and nature (*phusis*) as the Father. The error that Athanasius saw in Arius' teachings lay precisely in the alienation of the Son from the Father, which compromised the Son's divinity and so made His saving work impossible.

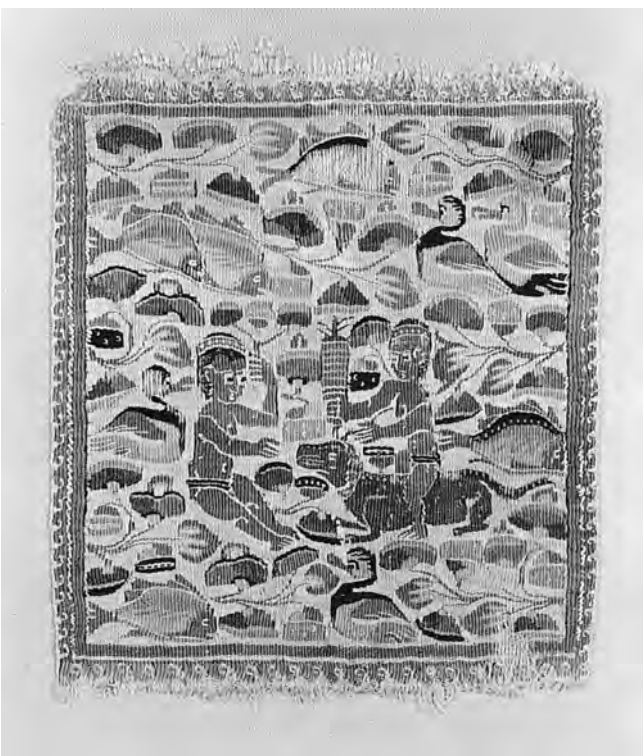

Figure 53.6 Egyptian tapestry of the Nile, from the fourth or fifth century, showing two putti, part of the entourage of the river god Nilos and symbolic of the river's fertility, playing among fish and ducks. By permission of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of George F. Baker, 1890, 90.5.825

By comparison with Origen a century earlier or the later Cappadocian Fathers, however, Athanasius was never a theoretical or intellectual theologian. As bishop of Alexandria and head of the Egyptian Church, his doctrinal teachings were driven by the needs of his clergy and congregations (Lyman 1993). The original motive behind the *Contra Gentes-De Incarnatione* was to prove the rationality of Christian belief against pagans who might mock the crucifixion and resurrection. Christianity's triumph over paganism was a theme of obvious relevance for a work written during the reign of Constantine, and Athanasius' attack on pagan idolatry included the Egyptians who still worshipped the water (*De Incarnatione* 45) in a society whose rhythms were dominated by the river Nile.

Salvation through Christ was inseparably intertwined with the faith and morality required to live a Christian life. This was a natural focus for Athanasius' *Festal Letters*. God permitted His Son to die for our sakes, and so the holy feast:

> leads us on from the cross through this world to that which is before us, and God produces even now from it the joy of glorious salvation, bringing us to the same assembly and in every place uniting all of us in spirit.
>
> *(*Festal Letter *5.2)*

Throughout the *Festal Letters* Athanasius unites his theological concerns with his wider ascetic and pastoral vision. And in doing so, he demonstrates how the doctrinal controversies that divided the fourth-century Church were not mere academic arguments but had profound implications for ordinary Christians.

The 'Arian Heresy' and the Nicene Creed

Christian tradition hailed Athanasius as the hero of the long fight against 'Arianism', and it was Athanasius above all who constructed the enduring image of the contemporary theological debates as a single 'Arian Controversy'. Beginning in the three *Orationes contra Arianos* (*c.* 339–46), and continuing across his later polemical writings, Athanasius split the Church into two polarised factions: the 'orthodox' (whom he represented) and the 'Arians' (everyone whom he opposed):

> When the blessed Alexander cast out Arius, those who remained with Alexander remained Christians; but those who went out with Arius abandoned the Saviour's Name to us who were with Alexander, and they were henceforth called Arians . . . While Arius is dead, and many of his followers have succeeded him, nevertheless those who hold the doctrines of that man, as being known from Arius, are called Arians.
>
> *(*Oratio contra Arianos *1.3)*

Athanasius' polarisation of fourth-century Christianity between 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy' proved extremely influential on subsequent centuries and has significantly distorted modern understanding of this complex period (Wiles 1996; Gwynn 2007). No agreed orthodox interpretation existed to resolve the questions that Arius' teachings had raised, and for much of his lifetime Athanasius' theology was far from representative of the beliefs held by the majority of the eastern Church. Arius was far less influential than the polemical emphasis upon his name might imply, and no later Christians actually held his doctrines. What emerged during the 340s–360s was a wide spectrum of competing theologies that cannot be neatly categorised as 'orthodox' or 'Arian' (Ayres 2004). The spectrum ranged from those who taught that the Son was unlike (*anomoios*) the Father by essence to those who believed that He was like (*homoios*) or like in essence (*homoios kat' ousian* or *homoiousios*). Athanasius regarded all these alternatives with suspicion, for each compromised to a varying degree the ontological unity of Father and Son. Amidst these competing arguments, in

the *De Decretis Nicaenae Synodi* (*c.* 350–5), Athanasius for the first time brought the Nicene Creed into the forefront of debate.

In the years directly following the Council of Nicaea, the original Nicene Creed was regarded with distrust and largely consigned to silence. The majority of eastern Christians disliked the unscriptural term *homoousios* and certainly did not endorse the creed as an authoritative statement for the Church. Even Athanasius paid little attention to Nicaea in his early writings, and the term *homoousios* occurs just once in the three *Orationes contra Arianos* (1.9). By the 350s, with tensions mounting between himself and Constantius, Athanasius needed a focus around which to rally support for his definition of the orthodox faith. The Council of Nicaea was still remembered as one of the chief events of Constantine's reign and had publicly condemned Arius and his heresy. From the *De Decretis Nicaenae Synodi* onwards, Athanasius proclaimed the Nicene Creed to be the only true safeguard against 'Arianism'. The prestige that the creed came to possess as the pre-eminent symbol of fourth-century orthodoxy was perhaps Athanasius' greatest single legacy. In his own words: 'one who does not hold the doctrines of Arius necessarily holds and intends the doctrines of the council' (*De Decretis Nicaenae Synodi* 20).

The triumph of Nicene orthodoxy

When Athanasius endorsed the Nicene Creed as the symbol of orthodoxy in the early 350s, neither his construction of 'Arianism' nor his theological principles underwent any significant change. Salvation was still achieved through the deification of humanity, with the ontological unity of Father and Son now expressed through the Nicene watchword *homoousios*. Near the end of the 350s, Athanasius extended the same principle to the hitherto rather neglected figure of the Holy Spirit. Nicaea had barely mentioned the third person of the Trinity, but in *c.* 357 Athanasius' friend Serapion of Thmuis alerted him concerning Egyptian Christians who denied that the Spirit shared the fully divine status of the Son. Athanasius' *Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit* (*c.* 357–8) represent the first in-depth justification of the Spirit's full divinity and place within the Trinity (Anatolios 2004: 212–33). Humanity is created and sanctified through the Spirit, and so our deification rests upon the unity of the Trinity in whose names we are baptised.

During the 360s and 370s, new doctrinal issues arose regarding Trinitarian terminology and Christ's human soul (Vaggione 2000). Athanasius was growing old and to a degree losing touch as debates moved beyond his 'anti-Arian' polemics. Nevertheless, his writings reveal how he continued to adapt his arguments for another Christian generation. The *De Synodis Arimini et Seleuciae* (359) and the *Tomus ad Antiochenos* (362) sought reconciliation with members of the eastern Church whom Athanasius had previously condemned as 'Arians', and the latter work upheld the human soul of Jesus which had been rejected by Athanasius' admirer Apollinaris of Laodicea. In his final major theological work, the *Letter to Epictetus of Corinth* (*c.* 372), Athanasius reaffirmed once more his vision of salvation and anticipated the fifth-century controversies over Christ's divine and human natures:

> What the human body of the Word suffered, this the Word, dwelling in the body, ascribed to Himself, in order that we might be enabled to be partakers of the Godhead of the Word. And truly it is strange that He it was who suffered and yet suffered not.
>
> *(*Letter to Epictetus *6)*

Judged by later definitions of Christian orthodoxy, Athanasius' theology leaves certain crucial questions unresolved. While more careful in his language than his contemporary Marcellus of Ancyra, who was denounced for the error of Sabellianism, Athanasius lacked the terminology to express clearly his understanding of the divine Trinity as three in one. The key terms *ousia* and *hypostasis* are used throughout his writings as synonyms, although he gradually accepted those who described the

Trinity as three *hypostases* as orthodox. Athanasius therefore never adopted the Trinitarian formula of 'three *hypostases* in one *ousia*' popularised by the Cappadocian Fathers. A similar difficulty is visible in Athanasius' doctrine of the Incarnation. Contrary to claims that Athanasius taught a 'spacesuit' Christology (Hanson 1988: 448), in which the divine Word had no share in the experiences of His human body, Athanasius consistently maintained the full humanity and full divinity of the incarnate Christ. But once again he struggled to articulate Christ's unity in a single person, and he did not develop the communication of idioms (attributing the properties of each of Christ's two natures to the other) exploited so effectively by Cyril of Alexandria. Neither could Athanasius' restricted use of the term *hypostasis* convey the doctrine of the Incarnation as the hypostatic union of two natures in one person that was adopted at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. These were differences of terminology, however, rather than of theological principles. In his vision of the Trinity and the Incarnation Athanasius differed little if at all from the Cappadocian Fathers or from Cyril, and his status as the defender of Nicaea against 'Arianism' made him a figure of authority in east and west for more than a millennium.

The Athanasian legacy

Athanasius had been a controversial figure for most of his career, but by his death in 373 he was recognised in east and west as the champion of the Nicene faith. When Gregory of Nazianus spoke in honour of Athanasius in Constantinople in May 380, the Alexandrian bishop was hailed as a model for future generations. 'His life and habits form an ideal of an episcopate and his teaching the law of orthodoxy' (Gregory, *Oration* 21.37). The fifth-century Greek ecclesiastical historians Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret shared the same heroic vision, and drew their narratives of the 'Arian Controversy' from Athanasius' polemic. In the Christological controversies that flowed directly from the fourth-century Trinitarian debates, Nestorius and Cyril alike appealed to Athanasius' authority, as did the councils of Ephesus in 431 and Chalcedon in 451 (Graumann 2002; Wessel 2004). Unfortunately, Athanasius' 'anti-Arian' writings now held little direct relevance, and his Christological language was too vague to aid in resolving the later debates. The expression 'one nature (*mia phusis*) of the Word incarnate', which Cyril believed to be Athanasian, in fact derived from the Apollinarian *De Incarnatione Dei Verbi*. Edited versions of Athanasius' genuine works also circulated, with their content revised to support differing interpretations (on the Armenian Miaphysite version of the *Letter to Epictetus*, see Thomson 1965). Athanasius' reputation commanded respect, but in the Byzantine east his original voice was increasingly lost behind legendary stories and pseudonymous or altered writings.

A similar story unfolded in the west. Athanasius is a rare example of a Greek father who attracted a western following during his own lifetime, aided by his years of exile in Gaul and Italy. Nevertheless, few of Athanasius' Greek works were widely read or translated into Latin after his death. The exception, unsurprisingly, was the *Life of Antony*. Jerome recommended Athanasius' ascetic writings to the women whom he taught (*Letter* 107.12), and even sought to surpass Athanasius and Antony in his *Life of Paul the First Hermit*. Augustine in his *Confessions* (8.6) vividly recalled the part that the *Life of Antony* played in his commitment to ascetic Christianity. The admiration that Jerome and Augustine showed for Athanasius was sincere, but did not require detailed knowledge of his ecclesiastical career or theology. Indeed, the single greatest contribution to Athanasius' reception in the Latin west was made once again by a work that he did not write. The so-called Athanasian Creed (or *Quicunque* from its opening word) was probably composed in southern Gaul near the end of the fifth century (Kelly 1964; Drecoll 2007). In theology the creed is clearly post-Athanasian (particularly in Christology) and western in the double procession of the Holy Spirit. Yet for the next thousand years, from Thomas Aquinas and the Scholastics to Martin Luther and John Calvin in the Reformation, it was this creed that Latin Christianity associated most strongly with Athanasius' name (Gwynn 2015).

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Athanasius' reputation still stood high. Even Edward Gibbon, rarely moved to praise Christian bishops, conceded that: 'Although his mind was tainted by the contagion of fanaticism, Athanasius displayed a superiority of character and abilities which would have qualified him, far better than the degenerate sons of Constantine, for the government of a great monarchy' (Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–88), chapter 21). John Henry Newman's panegyrical depiction of Athanasius in *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (first published in 1833) was followed by William Bright in the Athanasius entry for the *Dictionary of Christian Biography* (1877) and by Archibald Robertson's introduction to the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* translation of Athanasius' works (1892). In Germany, Adolf von Harnack admired Athanasius no less than his British counterparts, 'If we measure him by the standard of his time we can discover nothing ignoble or mean about him' (Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (third edition 1894–8), translated into English as *History of Dogma* IV.62).

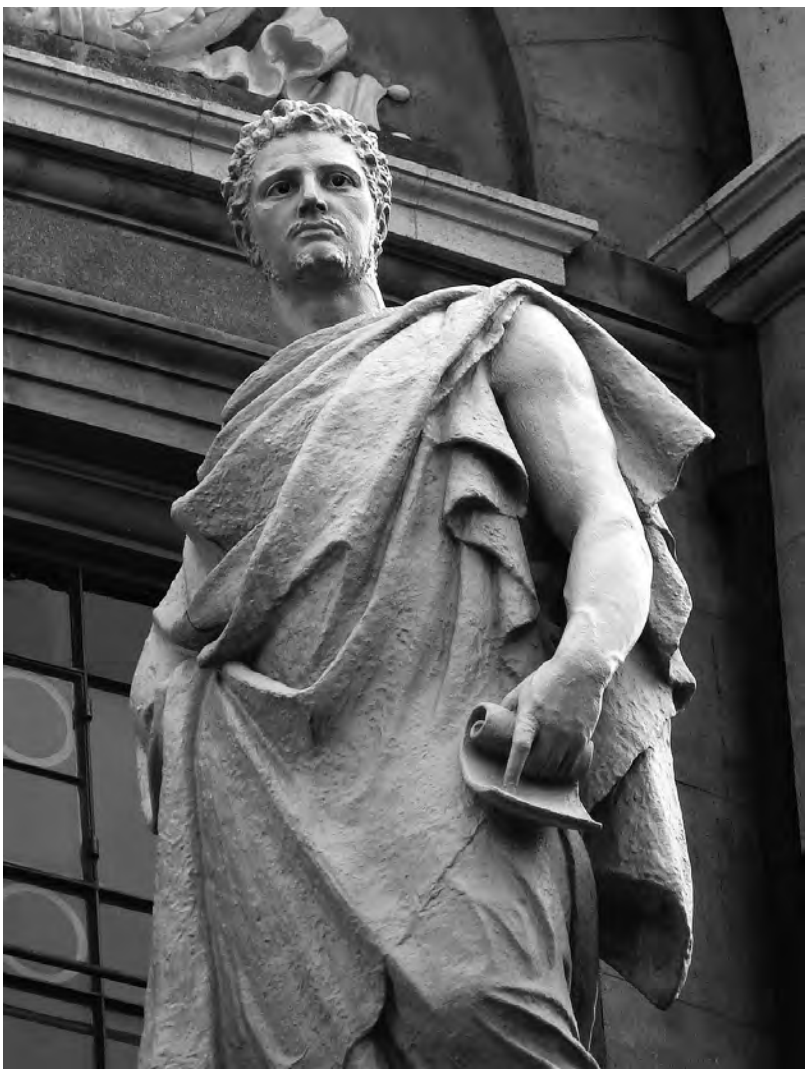

Figure 53.7 Statue of St Athanasius (1883–4) by Carl Rohl-Smith, Frederiks Church, Copenhagen, Denmark. Wikicommons

The last century has witnessed a resurgence of interest in Athanasius (see the recent syntheses in Gemeinhardt 2011 and Gwynn 2012). While some modern students continue to express unreserved admiration, however, most now view him with varying degrees of ambivalence. Athanasius' theological depth and his place in the history of Christian doctrine has gained greater appreciation, as have his ascetic and pastoral teachings. But his courage and dedication must be balanced against his violence in word and deed towards those who challenged his vision of Christianity. Whatever judgement we draw, Athanasius was beyond question a key figure in a period of fundamental transformation for both the Christian religion and the Roman empire. His career and writings offer a priceless insight into the age in which he lived, and in turn Athanasius' legacy continues to exert its influence on each new Christian generation.

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54
JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen

John in context

Biographic outline

Considering his importance, the details of John Chrysostom's life prior to his consecration as bishop of Constantinople in 397 are surprisingly obscure. The little that is certain is that he was born in Syrian Antioch, on the Orontes, *c.* 350 CE (Kelly 1995: 296–8). His family was sufficiently wealthy that in his youth he studied philosophy and rhetoric, the latter possibly from the famous Antiochene sophist Libanius. That training, in Greek *paideia*, was directed towards his formation as an elite male citizen and shaped his worldview and writings as much as the Christian training that was to follow (Mayer 2015b; Stenger 2016). When he was about eighteen he was baptised into the Christian faith, becoming a lector under the neo-Nicene bishop Meletius, who led one of two such factions within the Antiochene church. During this period (the 370s) he also began studying asceticism and scripture. The precise form that ascetic formation took (urban or extra-urban) is a point of disagreement among scholars (Illert 2000; Ritter 2012: 56–66). The results, however, are not. Throughout his ecclesiastical career a moderate urban ascetic agendum informed many of his treatises and homilies, and his emulation of the apostle Paul (Hartney 2004; Heiser 2012; De Wet 2015; Mayer 2015a). John was ordained a deacon in 381 by bishop Meletius and a priest in 386 by Meletius' successor, Flavian. He held that office from 386–97, establishing a reputation as one of the greatest orators the church has ever known. For much of this period, Theodosius I, a key supporter of Nicene Christianity, was emperor in Constantinople.

In September 397, when Nectarius, the bishop of Constantinople, died, John was chosen to succeed him. From expectation of a continuing career in Antioch, he was now obliged to turn his focus to the welfare of the Nicene community in the eastern imperial capital. The reasons given for John's deposition after fewer than six years on the episcopal throne are various (Liebeschuetz 1985; Elm 1998; Tiersch 2002; Van Nuffelen 2013b). Due to the overwhelming bias of the sources (Wallraff 2008; Katos 2011; Mayer 2013; Van Nuffelen 2013a), the best that can be said is that the factors are likely to have been multiple. On 20 June 404 he was exiled from Constantinople to Cucusus in Lesser Armenia, where he remained for three years. But his troubles were not over. Since many of his supporters from Antioch visited him in Cucusus, his enemies in Constantinople saw to it that he was exiled to a more remote place, Pityus on the eastern shore of the Black Sea. He died on the journey there, at Comana in Pontus, on 14 September 407.

Figure 54.1 Icon of Saint John Chrysostom, date unknown. Published courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expeditions to Mount Sinai

Understanding John Chrysostom

John, who has left a more extensive literary legacy than any other Greek Father, has been one of the most studied figures in early eastern Christianity. Mostly, however, he has been approached from a theological/spiritual standpoint (e.g. Meyer 1933), or chronological perspective, as demonstrated by two influential twentieth-century biographies, those by Chrysostomus Baur (1929–30) and J. N. D. Kelly (1995). These approaches have resulted in a compartmentalised treatment, whereby either John is presented against the backgrounds of first Antioch and then Constantinople, as if the

two phases of his life are unconnected, or he is viewed from various perspectives (e.g. preacher, bishop, pastor, master of the spiritual life), without a systematic attempt to integrate all these facets. The resulting picture has either taken on a hagiographic slant whereby he is presented as a saintly man much wronged by his time – a view influenced by the success of his supporters' accounts and John's later reception (see Mayer 2008, 2015c; Van Nuffelen 2013b) – or as one of a politically naïve and harsh authoritarian who in Constantinople alienated the nobility, the empress Eudoxia and many of his clergy. Additionally, there have been charges of misogyny (see Mayer 2014) and anti-semitism (Bibliowicz 2013: 185–92) levelled against him. It is our aim in this chapter to cut through some of these characterisations and to approach John Chrysostom in an integrated fashion by situating him in his cultural setting. In order to allow this perspective to come to the fore, John will be viewed through his interactions with different individuals and strata in the societies in which he operated during various phases of his life.

A preliminary note about sources

At the outset a word needs to be said about the considerable literary sources at our disposal. Not only have nearly 1,000 of John's homilies survived whole or in part, but some 238 letters of his have come down to us, the latter dating from his time in exile. Added to these are some fourteen treatises, some penned as early as 378, two written in 407, the last year of his exile (Mayer 2015e). In the case of the homilies it is often impossible to determine whether they were delivered during his presbyterate in Antioch or during his patriarchate in Constantinople (Mayer 2005). Many of them are available only in editions which date to the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries (see Malingrey 1973), and the definition of the corpus of homilies authentic to John is still not absolute (Voicu 2008). Similarly, the correspondence that survives is one-sided, within its limited time span contains numerous gaps, and was probably assembled selectively by his supporters (Mayer 2015d). Beyond his own works, the literary evidence focuses on John's life in Constantinople: the Church Histories of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, the anonymous *Life of Olympias*, the homilies of Severian of Gabala, the funeral oration by 'Martyrius', and Palladius' *Dialogus de vita Iohannis Chrysostomi* (see Kelly 1995: 291–5). Incidental information from liturgical or archaeological sources (Mayer and Allen 2012) can also be used with caution to supplement the literary sources. Despite this plethora of material, there is very little evidence that would enable us to draw a responsible portrait of John prior to his ordination as presbyter and even for much of his presbyterate, while the biases of the numerous sources that illustrate his episcopate are problematic.

John Chrysostom's social interactions

Close relationships

First, we will consider his interactions in close relationships, as bishop John seems to have worked directly with a number of women deacons of high social standing attached to the churches in Constantinople (Mayer 1999). The most famous of these, because the relationship is the best documented, was the aristocratic ascetic, Olympias, who had founded a female monastery in the city during the episcopate of John's predecessor, Nectarius (Hatlie 2007: 72–4). The nature of the relationship which existed between John and Olympias is attested in the surviving letters which John wrote to her (*Ep*. 1–17), which are much longer and more personal than the bulk of his correspondence, and in her biography (*Vita Olympiadis*) and Palladius' *Dialogue*. Unfortunately, her responses to his letters have not come down to us. Although in her biography her generosity towards John and his exclusive care for her community in return (*Vita Olymp*. 6, 8) are intended to elevate her piety and sanctity, it is possible that there is some truth in the details. John is said to have been the only male permitted to enter the premises of her ascetic establishment, which abutted the Great Church and had its own private passage

feeding directly into the church's narthex. Similarly, it is alleged that he ordained as deacon three of her relatives (*Vita Olymp.* 7), which implies some form of prior instruction and ongoing supervision by him. In return, she is said to have seen to his general and domestic needs, including day-to-day expenses and laundry (*Vita Olymp.* 8; Nicephorus Callistus, in Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 13.24).

Palladius' account of John's priorities when he learned of the order for his second exile indicates the esteem in which he held not just Olympias, but the circle of women deacons with whom she served in the Great Church. Whereas he farewelled the assembled bishops in the bishop's palace, he moved into the baptistery to take his leave separately of all the deacons – Olympias, Pentadia and Procla, with the widow Silvina (*Dial.* 10). All four elite widows had close imperial associations. Palladius further claims that John arranged to have a presbyter lead the grief-stricken women from the premises in order to prevent them stirring up the crowd, a precaution which suggests that the women's close association with the bishop was widely known. It is noteworthy, too, that it was not just Olympias but also Pentadia who was arrested and charged with setting fire to the Great Church as a protest against John's departure into exile (see *Ep.* 94). A number of women patrons at Antioch with whom he continued to correspond in exile were likewise identified by his enemies as key supporters and similarly prosecuted. Sabiniana, John's elderly aunt, a deacon much respected in Antioch, in fact arrived at Cucusus in 404 on the same day as John, declaring her intention to follow him wherever he was sent (*Ep.* 6 *ad Olymp.*). Together with his letters to other Antiochene women of some wealth and status, which hint at pre-existing long-standing relationships, this evidence suggests that the connections with wealthy, aristocratic women that he forged upon his arrival in Constantinople mirrored a familiar practice (Mayer 2014).

While we are not informed in such detail about John's close relationships with male clergy, we know that the Antiochene presbyter Constantius travelled to Cucusus to be with John in his exile (*Ep.* 6 *ad Olymp.*), was closely associated with John's circle of supporters and patrons in Antioch, and was next in line to succeed John's mentor, Flavian, as that city's bishop. Constantius seems to have spent a great deal of time with John in Cucusus, and to have been instrumental in supervising the latter's concerns in his absence, at least outside Constantinople (Delmaire 1997: 304). Like Olympias, Constantius rates a special mention by Palladius (*Dial.* 16), and it is clear in letter 62 that he has just been with John and is on his way back to the Antiochene presbyters to whom John is writing. Among these presbyters there is a group around Diophantes to whom John writes several warm letters from exile, which suggests a close relationship of long standing between them (*Ep.* 222, 239–41). A number of these presbyters are in turn intimately networked with the Antiochene women with whom John corresponded (Mayer 2014: 217–19). Delmaire (1997: 306–9) provides useful detail concerning John's correspondence with non-clerical men and women at both Constantinople and in Syria during the period of his exile and concludes that, with rare exceptions, the relationships with individuals in Syria were more enduring.

Kelly (1995: 16–17, 57) would also have the younger John working and associating closely at Antioch with both bishop Meletius and bishop Flavian, when lector and presbyter. In his late teens or early twenties he was, further, part of a close circle of young men of like background who experimented with the ascetic life (Illert 2000), a number of whom, like John, later entered the priesthood (e.g. Theodore of Mopsuestia). Concerning his later years, although his letters to Helpidius, bishop of Laodicea, differ considerably from those to Olympias, together these two are the sole recipients of letters from John in the final year of his exile (Delmaire 1997: 309), which may indicate that the relationship between the two bishops was closer than that of a senior bishop and his supporter. Similarly, John's defence at Constantinople of his archdeacon Serapion against Severian, bishop of Gabala, and his willingness to alienate the latter, could simply be a matter of principle, but may also suggest a greater than usual loyalty to this member of his clergy (see Mayer 2008: 43–5). Given that the greater portion of his life was spent in the service of the neo-Nicene church, it is not unreasonable to suppose that John's closest and most enduring relationships in each city were with women and men who were either themselves ordained or who worked closely with him in his ministry.

The imperial family

As bishop of the imperial capital John had *ex officio* contacts with the royal couple, the emperor Arcadius and the empress Eudoxia (Tiersch 2002: 183–228). We know that on a state occasion, the anniversary of the death of Theodosius I, John delivered a panegyric in the Church of the Holy Apostles in the presence of Arcadius and Eudoxia (*Nov. hom.* 6). He interacted with them also on extraordinary religious occasions that involved public processions (*Nov. hom.* 2–3). Sozomen (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 8.18.5) indicates that John baptised all their children, although there is some doubt as to whether John in fact officiated at the baptism of their son, Theodosius II, or whether this was performed in January 402 by John's rival and episcopal locum, Severian of Gabala. In the third Homily on Acts John suggests that as bishop he was treated at court with special reverence (PG 60,41 6–10). In regard to the relations between bishop and emperor, John's interaction with Arcadius cannot be gauged with any certainty, whether because of the emperor's carefully managed and therefore anonymous role, or the prominence accorded the empress in the sources. In a period when emperors and bishops were in competition for ecclesiastical authority, it is natural that John's *parrhesia* (exercise of frank speech) before the emperor is accorded prominence in the few explicit sources (Liebeschuetz 2011). John himself similarly brings to the fore his resistance to the soldiers sent to carry out Arcadius' decree when this conflicted with the authority of the church to grant asylum (*In Eutropium*). When writing to the bishop of Rome after he had been recalled from his first exile, on the other hand, John refers courteously to the emperor and, contrary to ps-Martyrius, Socrates and Sozomen, indicates that it is Arcadius (not his wife) who instigated his recall and reinstatement (*Ep. 1 ad Innocentum*, SC 342,78–9). Here, rather than emphasising the competition between bishop and emperor for spiritual authority, John describes the authority of the emperor and church as symbiotic and the emperor's support as validation of his own position. At the same time, it must be remembered that John could not have been deposed and sent into exile in 403 and again in 404 had the emperor not endorsed a synodical decision by the bishops who opposed John and on that basis issued the appropriate decree.

Regarding bishop and empress, the interests of both Johannite and anti-Johannite sources present us with the opposite problem. There is a great deal of information, little of it, however, to be relied upon (Mayer 2006a, 2013). In some sources Eudoxia is vilified as an arch-enemy of John (ps-Mart., *Oratio funebris*; Socr., *H. E.* 6.18; Soz., *H. E.* 8.20), in others praised as a pious supporter (ps-Chrys., *Sermo post reditum* 2). The sole verifiable reference that John himself makes to her occurs in a homily dating to 400 or later in which her piety and humility are substantially praised by him (*Nov. hom.* 2). This aligns with the claim made by Socrates (*H. E.* 6.8) and Sozomen (*H. E.* 8.8) that when John introduced Nicene nocturnal processions in Constantinople to counter those of the Homoian party, he received support from the empress in the form of large silver crosses and the participation of her chamberlain, Brison. The sources highlight an additional role that may have been authentic – her patronage too of visiting bishops. Eudoxia is said to have mediated in the dispute between John and his locum, Severian of Gabala, who had seemingly usurped the bishop's position during the latter's absence in Asia Minor in 402 (Socr., *H. E.* 6.11; Soz., *H. E.* 8.10), while also providing hospitality for those hostile to John's interests, notably Theophilus of Alexandria and Epiphanius of Salamis (Soz., *H. E.* 8.15). To place her actions in context, Olympias is said similarly to have provided hospitality impartially for visiting bishops hostile to John (Pall., *Dial.* 17). Both women extended their largesse in ways that were normative for powerful, wealthy women. Perhaps the most telling corrective to the sources that portray Eudoxia as John's arch-enemy is the evidence offered by imperial legislation to the effect that following her death in 404 the persecution of John and his supporters intensified (Delmaire 1991: 83). This suggests that up until that point she was able to restrain his enemies and their influence on the emperor to some degree. On her death, the latter seized the opportunity to escalate hostilities, including alienating John irretrievably from the emperor.

Figure 54.2 Solidus of Arcadius. ©Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC

Congregations and laity

As far as his relationships with the laity is concerned, John had the ability to inspire either great loyalty or great disaffection. Both these reactions we find at Constantinople. For instance, when John had a visiting bishop from Galatia preach in his stead, his congregation reacted negatively because they had wanted John to preach and had been expecting him (*In illud: Pater meus usque modo operatur*). When he returned both from his trip to Asia Minor in 402 and his first exile in 403, his supporters welcomed him back in the streets of the city with enthusiasm (*Sermo post reditum 1*; *De regressu*). Some laity, however, most notably women, grew hostile towards him, and attended *synaxis* (a liturgical assembly) elsewhere in the city presided over, it seems, by another bishop, who trod a fine line with respect to John's authority (*In Eph. hom.* 11). Since as bishop, with the exception of those who were his intimates, he probably had limited contact with laity on a pastoral level outside *synaxis* (Allen and Mayer 2000: 373–4), it is within worship and particularly through preaching that his polarisation of the laity was most likely effected. That this had already occurred while he was a priest at Antioch is suggested by Sozomen, who states that there, John's *parrhesia* pleased the people but grieved the wealthy and the powerful at whom it was targeted (*H. E.* 8.2.11). Most likely it was his employment of harsh as well as gentle speech (Rylaarsdam 2014), his constant emphasis on virtue and diagnosis of vices, and his message that it was the personal responsibility of everyone to correct their own soul (Mayer 2015b) that either appealed to his audiences or alienated them.

That John had relationships with a variety of individual congregations is evidenced in both cities. So in *In illud: In faciem ei restiti* it is clear that in Antioch he was assigned to the congregation at the old church (Palaia), and had the opportunity to build up a particular rapport with the group of Christians who regularly worshipped there. At other times, we find him attached to the clergy at the Great Church, but he also seems to have preached on a semi-regular basis in the Church of St Babylas (Mayer and Allen 2012: 174–80). At Constantinople, it seems that in order to preserve Nicene control of them, he was, in addition to the Great Church there, obliged to preside and preach periodically in a number of other churches (Mayer 2000a). This evidence of the expansiveness of his reach needs to be modified, however. Since a much larger number of Christians or nominal Christians tended to attend worship only at times of major festivals (particularly when they involved spectacular processions), his relationship with such irregular attendees in both cities is likely to have been less close. John's effect on his audiences varied markedly also, since in *De proph. obsc. hom.* 2 he refers to members of the audience pushing and shoving to get close to the ambo from which he was preaching, while in *In Heb. hom.* 15 it is clear that people are chatting and making amusing comments to each other or else openly laughing while he is preaching his sermon.

Figure 54.3 Ambo of Great Church, Constantinople. Photo by Wendy Mayer and John Hunter Farrell

Clergy

In John's relationships with clergy, whether of the same status as himself, of a more elevated status or subordinate, we also observe a variety of interactions. In Antioch his relations with bishop Meletius and with Flavian, Meletius' successor, have traditionally been thought to have been close (e.g. Kelly 1995: 57, 103), to the point where Flavian deputised John to take over many of his duties during the latter part of John's presbyterate. There is no clear evidence for this, however, beyond John's obvious popularity as a preacher, the suggestion in *In illud: In faciem ei restiti* that Flavian on at least one occasion took John away from his regular duties to accompany him on some official occasion, and John's close relationship with the presbyter Constantius who appears to have been groomed as Flavian's successor after John departed for Constantinople. The fact that John preached as one of a number of presbyters or in conjunction with Flavian on festival occasions (e.g. *De b. Philogonio*, *De s. Babyla*, *In diem natalem*) merely reflects routine procedure during this time. Again, John's warm encomia on Flavian and Meletius in *Cum presbyter ordinatus fuit*, *In Meletium* and *De statuis hom*. 3 and 21 could owe as much to rhetoric as to a genuinely close and warm relationship between John and these bishops. His relations with other clergy, male and female, in Antioch have yet to be explored properly and documented. Nonetheless, we know that he had more or less annual contact with a group of rural Syriac-speaking monk-priests who came in from the surrounding countryside to consult with Flavian and appeared in John's own congregation on occasion (Van de Paverd 1991: 260–89), and, as we have seen, there is also evidence in his letters of his continuing contact with various clergy from Antioch after his transfer to Constantinople.

We are much better informed about John's relations with the clergy in the imperial capital, although these are not usually highlighted in the biographies. Regarding the clergy whom John inherited at Constantinople, Palladius (*Dial.* 5) makes it clear that on his arrival the new bishop conducted a major review of their activities and lifestyles, alienating many of them in the process because of his stricter views (Tiersch 2002: 135–51). At the Synod of the Oak a number of the charges in fact targeted his alleged mistreatment of them (Van Nuffelen 2013b). Additionally, John was not averse to ordaining and promoting his own candidates to positions. This was demonstrated most notably by his interference in church affairs in Ephesus which resulted in the consecration of Heracleides as bishop there (Socr., *H. E.* 6.11.11), and by the promotion of the deacon Serapion to the post of chief supervisor of church administration in Constantinople, and later to bishop of Heracleia (Socr., *H. E.* 6.17). Chrysostom's relations with visiting clergy were not always smooth, as evidenced by the visit of Theophilus of Alexandria (*Ep. 1 ad Innoc.*) and Epiphanius of Salamis, who eventually snubbed him (Pall., *Dial.* 8; Socr., *H. E.* 6.14; Soz., *H. E.* 8.14). Despite John's initially cordial contact with Severian of Gabala, empress Eudoxia, as we have seen, had to intervene in order to reconcile the two, and the homilies *De pace* imply an interim public reconciliation. On the other hand, if we may believe that around forty bishops were with Chrysostom at the time he received news of his exile (Palladius, *Dial.* 8), it seems that a large number of visiting bishops supported his authority and activities. Palladius' partisan account of John's life and trials is witness to the strength of attachment to John on the part of at least one fellow bishop, as is the equally partisan funeral oration by 'Martyrius', if the identification of its author as Philip, bishop of Side (Wallraff 2008: 27 n. 11), proves valid. John's authority over and pastoral care of his clergy in Constantinople are revealed by his letters to the presbyters Theophilus and Sallustius (*Ep.* 212, 203), in which he dwells on their failure to continue their duties immediately after his deposition.

The biases in these relationships can be brought out by supplying further context, in that all of the clergy mentioned thus far, whether colleague, friend or enemy, are neo-Nicene. At the time that he was bishop of Constantinople, the Novatian Christians had also been accorded imperial sanction and worshipped freely inside the city in their own churches. John's relationship with their bishop is said to have been antagonistic (Socr., *H. E.* 6.22), while in 402 he deposed a number of Novatian bishops and replaced them with Nicene counterparts in Asia Minor on his way home from Ephesus (Socr., *H. E.* 6.11.13). Similarly, it should be pointed out that John provided a fertile basis for the

charge of supporting Origenism that Theophilus and the monk Isaac levelled against him (Katos 2011: 86–95; Van Nuffelen 2013b), in that John gathered around himself, ordained, and offered hospitality in Constantinople to a number of deacons, presbyters and bishops who had studied with Evagrius in Egypt and were identified as Origenist, Palladius and John Cassian among them.

Ascetics

If John's relationships with women are now somewhat clearer, the precise nature of his own ascetic formation and its influence upon his subsequent relationships with ascetics both in Antioch and Constantinople have in the last decade become considerably more obscure. Whatever form it took, John's experimentation with the ascetic life during his twenties in Antioch as well as the spectrum of ascetic life available in that city and its vicinity gave him first-hand experience of various ascetic lifestyles and their devotees. Importantly, there is crossover between the category of clergy and ascetics in that a number of the clergy with whom John associated in both Antioch and Constantinople were practising ascetics as well as ordained. This is the case with the bishops Flavian, Palladius and Diodore, and the initial supporter and subsequent enemy of John, Acacius of Berrhoea. One of the few details that seems certain is that John trained with several companions in an urban *asketerion* under Diodore and Carterius. Among those companions was Theodore, subsequently bishop of Mopsuestia. Certainly, a strong interest in urban asceticism and the transformation of the domestic households of his congregants into modified *asketeria* permeates his preaching (De Wet 2015; Stenger 2016). Similarly, his admiration of the apostle Paul leads John ultimately to present him as an ascetic exemplar (Heiser 2012).

John seems to have been surrounded by ascetic women. His close contact with Olympias and her monastery in Constantinople is, as we have seen, well attested. Similarly, the women deacons who formed his inner circle there were all widows who had chosen not to enter into a second marriage. This reflected his family experience, in that his own mother was a widow and probably led a celibate life (*Ad viduam iuniorem* 2; SC 138.120), while his aunt Sabiniana seems to have been a celibate as well as a deacon. He also appears to have considered male ascetics (monks) essential to certain charitable and missionary activities, although his relationship with these ascetic men was most likely administrative rather than personal. His letters witness to his recruitment of monks for, and their active involvement in, a pagan mission in Phoenicia conducted under the auspices of the Antiochene church (*Ep.* 53, 123, 221), while at Constantinople he appointed monks to staff the hospitals he founded (Pall., *Dial* 5).

His admiration for, and appreciation of the psychotherapeutic value of, *askesis* had, however, specific limits. While he approved of the male eremetic ascetics and monastic communities that dotted the mountains that formed a backdrop to Antioch, encouraging his parishioners to walk up and visit them (e.g. *In Matt. hom.* 69/70, 72/73; *In 1 Tim. hom.* 14), he disapproved strongly of the urban practice in which ascetic women set up domestic households with clergy (syneisaktism) (Leyerle 2001). He similarly disapproved of male ascetics who lapsed into general audience behaviour, such as laughter, during worship (*In Heb. hom.* 15; PG 63,122 5–7). In Constantinople he came into conflict with monks who operated as patrons independently of his episcopal authority (Soz., *H. E.* 8.9). This was particularly the case with the influential monk Isaac (Caner 2002: 190–9). There are hints of a further negative encounter, this time of a personal nature, indicating that as a young man John may have been abused by a male ascetic mentor (Morris 2016: 99–136).

Administrative officials

Both in Antioch and in Constantinople, John had opportunity to observe the work of administrative officials and to become acquainted with them personally. In Antioch, for example, in 387 the *consularis Syriae* came into the church to calm the people in the period of intense fear after the riots

(*De statuis hom.* 16; Van de Paverd 1991: 55), while it is possible that an official of similar status, who is simply termed 'the archon', led the procession occasionally in Antioch on the feast-day of certain martyrs (*Hom. in martyres*). When John was escorted from Antioch to Constantinople for consecration as bishop of that city, it is said that a *comes* was entrusted with the task of summoning and escorting him (Pall., *Dial.* 5). Officials who were Christians, such as the *magister militum per Orientem* Ellebichus, may also have been encountered by John when he assisted in distributing the eucharist.

In Constantinople contact with high-level officials occurred both in and outside the domain of worship. John alludes to a long-standing hostility between himself and the powerful eunuch and chief chamberlain Eutropius (*In Eutropium*), involving personal representations to Eutropius on John's part. The power in the relationship was reversed when Eutropius, who had banned the right of churches to provide asylum, later sought asylum at John's altar. In 400, at imperial behest, John was involved in negotiations with the Gothic general, Gainas, who had demanded of the emperor that his three chief political enemies, the ex-consul Aurelianus, the general Saturninus and the *comes* (Count) John, be handed over to him as hostages. Count John, who managed to escape being handed over to Gainas, nonetheless conceived a great dislike for Chrysostom because of John's failure to support him adequately, while Saturninus' widow, Castricia, was left with an enduring dislike of the bishop as well (Tiersch 2002: 281–308). Close contact must have developed between John and Eudoxia's chamberlain, Brison, who trained the church choir and assisted with the nocturnal processions which John instituted. He also encountered Brison when he was recalled from his first exile, in that the chamberlain was the official entrusted with the letter of recall (Socr., *H. E.* 6.16; Soz., *H. E.* 8.18). John continued to write to him from exile (*Ep.* 190, 234). En route into exile the second time, John met various officials from other cities, perhaps at Caesarea (Delmaire 1997: 306), and most obviously consorted constantly with the military escort (*praefectiani*) who accompanied him. He wrote to several high-level Constantinopolitan officials from his place of exile, although in thinking that they were his supporters John made a number of mistakes (Delmaire 1997: 306–8).

Relations with non-Christians

Jews

We come now to John's conduct towards people who practised other religions. As awareness of the role of rhetoric in Christian identity formation has advanced, determining the reality of his interactions with non-Christians, both Jews and pagans, has become increasingly complicated. It has recently been suggested, for instance, that the well-known account by John of a woman in Antioch forced by another Christian to ratify a business contract in a local synagogue is not real, but a fictional construct (Fonrobert 2005). Complicating the definition of Jew (whether by ethnicity or religion) is the recent argument that the 'Judaisers' who are addressed by John in his infamous homilies *Adversus Judaeos* are not Christians who adopt Jewish practices, but in fact local Messiah-worshippers who are ethnic Jews (Black 2014). Although in practical terms it should be pointed out that on the days he preached these homilies few of these individuals, if any, were among his audience. Meanwhile, the existence of a vibrant and diverse Jewish community in Antioch in late antiquity is well established (Van der Horst 2000), and a number of active synagogues were present within both the city and its suburbs. The Jews in Antioch had links with the community in Palestine. The orator Libanius, for instance, both corresponded with the Jewish patriarch there and dealt with Jewish tenants on his own family estate locally (Sandwell 2007: 113–14). Whereas these Jews are mostly defined in ethnic terms and Libanius' attitude varies from one of sympathy and support to one of disapproval, depending on the nature of the patron-client relationship involved, John's relations with Jews are considerably more opaque, in large part because he is reacting to the religious policies of the emperor Julian vis-à-vis Christians, in which Christians were viewed as errant Jews and Jewish interests promoted (Côté 2012). John's persistent identification of Jews with the religion, along with everything that

he says about them, both positive (see Ritter 2012: 110) and negative (see Wilson VanVeller forthcoming), needs to be viewed in this light. Unfortunately, this concern is so dominant that it obscures how he might in fact have related to Jews in person. A quite different aspect of Jewish-Christian interaction in which John participated in Antioch, on the other hand, has recently been brought to light. In his exegesis of Genesis, John displays knowledge of a roughly contemporary specifically Jewish exegetical tradition. Whether that knowledge was direct or mediated through his teacher, Diodore, via Eusebius of Emesa, is uncertain (Pomeroy forthcoming).

While we must assume that Jews played a part in the society of Constantinople too, there is little information about Jews or a Jewish community in that city in the sources. A rare exception is John's reference to the city-wide response to the military harassment of the baptisands on Easter 404 (*Ep. 1 ad Innoc.* 8), where he claims that not just Nicene Christians, but even the local Jews, Greeks and heretics were horrified.

Pagans

In terms of pagans and John's relationship with them, it is again somewhat difficult to separate his preaching against their religious beliefs and practices from his encounter with them on a day-to-day basis. This is because at both Antioch and Constantinople pagan rituals and events had an integral role in civic and day-to-day life, regardless of the religious affiliations of the inhabitants. So at Antioch the rhythms of the city, its calendar, theatrical performances and horse races were intimately linked to long-standing pagan celebrations. This included the local Olympic games. In *In S. Iulianum* John expresses his concerns about the established custom among the Antiochene citizenry of retiring to Daphne on the following day for a meal, which was accompanied by male choruses and other lewd festivities (PG 50,672–4). In *In kalendas*, too, he references some of the alcohol-fuelled celebrations with which the church had to compete at that time of year. The influence of pagan activities undoubtedly obtained to a large degree in Constantinople as well, where the impact of the imperial cult, despite the overt Christianisation of the imperial family, would have been more in evidence. In the capital both the hippodrome and festivities associated with the imperial cult physically disturbed church services, either through the noise or through the competition for attendance (*Contra ludos et theatra*; PG 56,263). The church historians Sozomen and Socrates describe public celebrations associated with the new statue erected in honour of the empress Eudoxia (Soz., *H. E.* 8.20; Socr., *H. E.* 6.18). As was the case with Judaism, here too it was John's constant concern to instruct his parishioners to differentiate Christian civic obligations from pagan or paganising activities. In private life the influence of pagan practices was similarly dominant. John tells us, for instance, that his parishioners preferred to consult pagan priests when they lost a valuable animal (*In 2 Tim. hom.* 8), and indicates that the influence of Christianity on both marriage and funeral rituals continued to be minimal (e.g. *In Col. hom.* 12).

Even without precise detail, the influence of John's encounters with paganism and pagan individuals on a personal level should not be underestimated. His entire education prior to his baptism conformed to the traditional upbringing of an elite young male. During that period he was instructed by non-Christian teachers in every aspect of Greek *paideia*. This pagan education permeates every aspect of his own pedagogical method (Rylaarsdam 2014; Mayer 2015b), and strongly shapes his ideas on slavery (De Wet 2015).

Relations with heterodox and schismatic Christians

Closely aligned with how John related to non-Christians is his interaction with heterodox Christians and schismatics. As a young man he grew up in Antioch in a church that was divided between at least three factions, including homoian Christians and two schismatic Nicene communities. For a brief period around 375, the city also boasted a fourth bishop, an Apollinarian. John himself was appointed

Figure 54.4 Tyche of Antioch, Galleria dei candelabri, Vatican Museum, Rome. Photo by Wendy Mayer and John Hunter Farrell

lector in one of the two schismatic factions – the one that was led by bishop Meletius – at a time when homoian, rather than Nicene Christianity was in favour (Kelly 1995: 10–17). John's experience among that group of Christians involved services in the open air on the *campus martius* across the river from the city, because the group had been banned from the city itself and its churches placed in the hands of the homoians by the emperor Valens. It is likely that the *asketerion* run by Diodore and Carterius, both adherents of the Meletian faction, was situated across the river in the same vicinity (Mayer and Allen 2012: 51–2). It was only when John was ordained deacon that his faction became prominent in Antioch. The schism between his group of Nicene Christians and the other persisted, however, during the entire length of his presbyterate there, and it was only after his elevation to the see of Constantinople that the issue was resolved (Kelly 1995: 116–18). Consequently, when John speaks of the Christians in Antioch he is always talking about a confused and divided community, just as when he talks of processions with the whole city in attendance on days of martyrial festivals his comments must be viewed with some scepticism. The techniques which he learned during those years in Antioch for promoting the Christian faction to which he was attached, techniques which

would have included careful phrasing of doxologies and the conduct of nocturnal processions and of litanies, would have prepared him for the situation which he found on his arrival in Constantinople. There the homoians, who had dominated the city until the accession of Theodosius, still exerted a degree of influence over the populace. Similarly, some of the early monastic communities there had heterodox leanings (Hatlie 2007: 62–5). In a sermon attacking the Anomoeans, the most radical of the homoian parties, John himself indicates that the Nicene Christians of Constantinople are in the minority (*Contra Anomoeos hom.* 11). The presence of the Novatians within the city, with their own churches and imperial protection, is likely to have struck him as contributing to a situation that paralleled what he had been familiar with in Antioch. What is noteworthy in regard to the way John treats the heterodox and schismatic in his preaching is that they are to be managed in the same way as Jews and pagans, namely as having sick souls that require healing (Laird 2013). The one difference, in his view, is that the souls of heterodox and schismatic Christians are perhaps less far gone in their illness and slightly more amenable to therapy.

Relationships across the social strata

Lower status groups?

When we consider John's relationships with the various social strata in Antioch and Constantinople, it is interesting to speculate in the first instance whether ascetics with whom he associated as a young man came from markedly different social backgrounds from those with whom he was used to associating or whether they were of a similar social standing. Bishop Flavian, while ascetic, was clearly from the upper class (*Sermo cum presbyter* [PG 48,696 46–9]; *In Gen. sermo* 1 [PG 54,585 47–67]), and the young men with whom John lived when experimenting with urban asceticism in the *asketerion* of Diodore and Carterius were all from the same comfortable social background (Kelly 1995: 18–23). On the other hand, the Syriac-speaking rural monk-presbyters whom he encounters in Antioch every year or so are less educated and probably of a lower social status (Van de Paverd 1991: 281). In regard to the social strata of John's audiences when he preached, it is likely that at least one of the congregations with which he was involved in Antioch contained middle-class persons, including artisans, and possibly also soldiers (*De baptismo Christi* [PG 49,365 5–14]; *De paen. hom.* 3 [PG 49,291 31–5 *a.i.*]).

Aside from preaching, it is difficult to say whether John ever had any direct interaction with lower social classes. Certainly he passed beggars and the homeless in the streets of Antioch (*De eleemosyne*) and encountered them outside the churches and martyria there (*De paen. hom.* 3; PG 49,294); it is also possible that he was accosted by beggars in the agoras of Constantinople (*In Acta apost. hom.* 3; PG 60,39 27–8). While, according to Palladius (*Dial.* 5), John organised hospitals in Constantinople, including one specialising in the care of lepers (Ps. Mart., *Or. funeb.* 61–4), there is no evidence that he visited these institutions or involved himself in the day-to-day care of the inmates. Again, it is valid to wonder what he means when, as in *In princ. Actorum hom.* 1 (PG 51,69 51–61), he says that the poor are absent from the church on that occasion because they have to earn their living. Is this perhaps a similar social group to the one he refers to in *De mutatione nom. hom.* 3 (PG 51,136 21–7), where he says that married males who spend their lives in daily toil or are caught up in business affairs can only manage to attend the liturgy once a week? From John's other homilies it is patent that the poverty which he discusses on many occasions is relative, possibly because the truly poor may not have taken part in the *synaxis*, but waited outside the church to beg (Mayer 2006b).

Upper status groups

In general, however, the bulk of the evidence points to audiences comprised of the wealthy to the very wealthy, in particular the aristocratic elite (Mayer 2000b). This is consonant with the circles

of patrons (ordained, lay and/or ascetic) in both cities with whom John worked. The women from Antioch with whom he continued to correspond in exile, for instance, all belong to the upper echelons of Antiochene society, as do the men with whom they and John are networked (Mayer 2014). In Constantinople, as already indicated, John seems to have moved to a large extent in the circles of the rich and influential, that is, the senatorial and curial classes. As foster-mother of Eudoxia, Marsa had influence on, and an especially close connection with, the empress. On his travels in exile, it is the wealthy who offer hospitality in particular and assist John in whatever way possible. For example, Seleucia, the wife of Rufinus in Caesarea, offers him her suburban estate and gives instructions for her manager to gather farmers from her various estates to defend John, if the monks should threaten him there (*Ep. 9 ad Olymp.*), while John himself says that on arrival in Cucusus stewards and managers kept turning up, whose masters had written instructing them to see to his needs (*Ep. 6 ad Olymp.*).

Different ethnic and language groups

While the city of Constantinople must have struck John in many ways as similar to Antioch in that both cities were large, wealthy, influential and Hellenised, there was not only similarity but also difference in the two locations with regard to the different language groups and ethnic communities with which he came into contact. In Antioch he regularly encountered Syriac-speaking farmers on the occasion of martyrial festivals which drew such people to the city from the surrounding countryside, particularly when a market-day was associated (*De b. Philogonio*; *De ss. martyribus* [PG 50,705–7]). In the case of Syriac-speaking ascetics who also operated as priests, such occasions apparently also provided an opportunity for consultation with their bishop. Since such persons appear not to have spoken Greek, and it is probable that Flavian, who grew up in Antioch as a member of the wealthy upper classes, did not speak Syriac, the episcopal entourage must have incorporated bilingual interpreters. The same may also have been the case on the occasions when such persons attended worship, although it may be that worship continued in Greek as usual and the Syriac-speaking visitors were passively literate. The regular influxes of beggars and the rural poor into Antioch at times of famine would also have exposed John and his fellow citizens to non-Greek speakers (Libanius, *Or.* 1.205–11). The extent to which Syriac-speakers lived within the city of Antioch and comprised a normal sector of the community is unknown, although recent research on linguistic diversity in this region suggests that bilingualism, as well as the presence of local Aramaic-speakers, may have made for a more linguistically fluid demography (Shepardson 2014: 137–41).

At Constantinople there was a relatively large Gothic-speaking community because of the strong representation of ethnic Goths in the armed forces. The Nicene members of this community had their own church, in which John preached in Greek on at least one occasion (*Cum presbyter Gothus*). While he preached in Greek, the lessons were read in Gothic, and a homily was also preached by a presbyter in Gothic. The extent to which the liturgy itself was conducted in Gothic is unknown. John also wrote in Greek to a group of Gothic monks whose monastery was situated in the suburbs of Constantinople, suggesting bilingualism on their part (*Ep.* 207). The letter indicates that they had been working with John to care pastorally for the local Gothic Nicene community. John also encountered a range of languages and ethnicities simply because Constantinople was the capital of the eastern empire and the residence of the imperial couple, a factor which drew people from all over the east who were seeking patronage and influence. Severian of Gabala was a native speaker of Syriac who arrived during John's tenure and to whom John entrusted the task of preaching (in Greek) while he himself was absent in Asia Minor (Socr., *H. E.* 6.11; Soz., *H. E.* 8.10). Acacius of Berrhoea, a semi-permanent resident of Constantinople at this period, was likewise a Syrian native, although presumably, like Severian, he was capable of conversing in Greek. By the same token, John Cassian, whom John ordained to the priesthood in Constantinople (Pall., *Dial.* 3), came from the west and presumably spoke Latin by preference, as did the aristocratic widow Silvina, with whom John was closely associated (Mayer 1999). This also appears to be the case with Amprucla, to whom

Figure 54.5 Panel, Great Church, Constantinople. Photo by Wendy Mayer and John Hunter Farrell

John wrote from exile and who he says could have written to him in her own language (*Ep.* 103). John himself, due to his secular education in Antioch, where Latin continued to be the official language of imperial administration, was literate in it and possibly bilingual (ps-Mart., *Or. funeb.* 50). Regarding the diversity of languages and ethnicities in the capital, John states explicitly that during one nocturnal procession the Psalm was sung in Greek, Latin, Syriac and Gothic (*Nov. hom.* 2).

Relations with visitors

This brings us to a final category with whom John interacted: visitors, as distinct from permanent residents. Firmly fixed as John Chrysostom was in his communities, there were numerous occasions when he was called upon to interact with people who were not a permanent part of the communities in Antioch or Constantinople. Here we have to think of visitors, itinerants, country people and clergy from elsewhere in the same district as well as from other districts. Aside from the rural Syrian monk-priests who came to Antioch for consultation, Antioch was a major see in Syria and the east, and synods of varying dimensions were frequently held there (see e.g. *De incompr. dei nat. hom.* 2; SC 28 bis.142 20–5), a fact which would explain why sometimes a number of bishops were in attendance on Flavian when John was preaching (*In Gen. sermo* 8). Because of seasonal factors Antioch was also particularly susceptible to the influx of homeless individuals and beggars, who were greeted with deep suspicion by the permanent residents (*De eleemosyna*). These same people are probably some of the homeless whom John passed in the street on his way to the church. Antioch was also the site of military administration for the eastern front and John encourages his parishioners there to set aside a room for strangers to the city, just as they provide clothing, food and board in their houses for soldiers when required (*In Phil. hom.* 9; *In Acta apost. hom.* 45).

In Constantinople the semi-permanent presence of a large number of bishops during John's episcopate is striking. Often these men were in residence for reasons of personal advantage, as the cases of Acacius of Berrhoea, Severian of Gabala and Antioch of Ptolemais illustrate. Relations between episcopal peers were delicate and expectations of the local bishop, in terms of the hospitality and diplomatic respect to be accorded such visitors, high. Severian, it will be remembered, was appointed John's locum in his absence, while, as already mentioned, on at least one occasion a visiting bishop was given licence by John to preach in his stead. In his letter to the bishop of Rome, John claims that on the night of Easter Saturday 404 there were more than forty bishops with him for the baptism of the female catechisands (*Ep. 1 ad Innoc.*). Some bishops, like Theophilus of Alexandria, were summoned to the capital for reasons of ecclesiastical politics, while Epiphanius of Salamis travelled there in order to charge John with Origenism at the instigation of Theophilus. Where Theophilus spurned John's hospitality and failed to greet him as expected, Epiphanius, it is alleged, attempted to ordain on John's territory, held a *synaxis* without permission, and had the intention of denouncing

John during a *synaxis* in the Church of the Holy Apostles (Socr., *H. E.* 6.12–14; Soz., *H. E.* 8.14). Monks too came to Constantinople, such as Isaac (from Syria), and those from Nitria who sought arbitration between themselves and Theophilus of Alexandria. For canonical reasons John tried to avoid the latter issue, organising various noble women to feed the monks and help them support themselves. Ultimately the men, frustrated by John's inaction, went directly to the empress Eudoxia for help (Soz., *H. E.* 8.13; Pall., *Dial.* 7–8). Visitors could be both a blessing and a curse and nowhere more so than in the imperial capital.

Conclusion

What we begin to observe when we view the person of John from these different perspectives is an array of interconnecting pieces which together offer up a picture of a complex man in a complex society. For instance, the blurred boundaries between church, city and state at this time, in conjunction with John's private background, see him interacting throughout his life with a range of administrative officials both within the ecclesiastical sphere and outside it. Similarly, the picture of the patronage relationships and networks, clerical, imperial and lay, in which John participated in both cities is emerging as increasingly complex. Thanks to the scholarship since the mid 2000s, the distinctiveness of the features of each city within which he lived and worked has to some degree collapsed, particularly in regard to ethnicity, language, social strata, demographic complexity and the role of elite women. Substantially dissolved too is any boundary that remained, in the historian's view, between John's secular and Christian-ascetic education. At the same time, the biases in the historical sources concerning his life and the need to filter their accounts through the lens of the Johannite schism have become significantly clearer. Emerging into greater focus too is the problematic of reading John's rhetoric about Jews, pagans and heterodox Christians at face value. How John genuinely interacted with Jews is further from our grasp than ever before. Finally, it should now be clear that further careful work has yet to be done before a reliable psychological study of John (*pace* Liebeschuetz 2011) can be arrived at or the predominant image of John as a wronged saint that is promoted by the bulk of the sources deconstructed.

That said, what remains firm is the value of viewing John Chrysostom through the lens of his relationships and interactions. Whether in Antioch or Constantinople, John was, on the one hand, a cleric who devoted his life to promoting the interests of neo-Nicene Christianity; and, on the other, very much a man of the large, wealthy, bustling, Hellenised city. His reactions to the circumstances of his exile serve to underline the intelligence with which the route and manner of his deportation were selected. Few other punishments could have been more painful to a man of his particular background, status and generation.

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55
GREGORY OF NYSSA

Elena Ene D-Vasilescu

Gregory's life

St Gregory of Nyssa (*c.* 332 – after 385),[1] often referred to as Nyssen, was one of the three representatives of the Cappadocian theological school, the other two being Basil of Caesarea, 'the Great' (his older brother), and Gregory Nazianzus (his friend). He was probably born in Neocaesarea, Pontus (the modern Nikşar in north-eastern Turkey). Gregory was first educated by his brother, Basil, his sister Macrina and their mother Emmelia,[2] and probably later at schools in Caesarea and Athens[3] where he might have studied philosophy, literature, and very probably the sciences of his day; at least this is what the knowledge displayed in his writings suggests. It is not easy to verify the details of his education as he himself declares that, additionally to Basil, 'Paul, John and the rest of the Apostles and prophets' were his teachers'.[4] He was initially an *Anagnostes* (a layman reader), and then decided on a career in rhetoric. He married,[5] but when his wife died he became a priest at the entreaty of his friends, Nazianzen especially. Nyssen worked for a short while in Constantinople in 349, which he visited often.[6] In *c.* 371 his older brother, Basil, Bishop of Caesarea at that time, ordered him, rather against his will, to become bishop of the seat of Nyssa, a small town in St Basil's metropolitan district, in today's central Turkey.

In 376, while St Gregory was absent, a synod of Arian bishops and court prelates gathered in Nyssa and deposed him, inducing him for a while to adopt a wandering life. In 378, after the death of the Arian emperor Valens,[7] 'the father of fathers' (as Gregory would later be called by the Second Council of Nicaea/the Seventh Ecumenical Council in AD 787[8]) returned to his see in Nyssa. A year later, he attended a Synod at Antioch and was subsequently sent by attendees of this gathering to visit the diocese of Pontus. While there, he was elected archbishop of Sebaste/Sebasteia (380), which he had to administer for a few months, although much against his will. In 381, together with his friend St Gregory of Nazianzus, Nyssen took a prominent role at the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople where the trinitarian dogmas of Nicene Orthodoxy prevailed; he supported Nazianzen on that occasion. In 383 Gregory of Nyssa was again in the capital of the Byzantine Empire at the summons of emperor Theodosius for another council,[9] and again in 394 for a synod called by the Patriarch Nectarios/Nektarios, and also in 385 when he delivered a funeral oration in the same city for the princess Pulcheria (on the 24 August 385) and, after a few weeks ('perhaps 14 September'),[10] for her mother, the empress Flacilla.[11] Apparently he died soon afterward.[12] His memory is celebrated on 10 January.

Gregory's writings

Among Nyssen's treatises still central to scholarly preoccupations are: *On Virginity* (before 379), *De opificio hominis/On the Making of Man* (380), *Against Eunomius* (its books were written in various years between 378 and 384),[13] *Homilies on the Song of Songs* (381),[14] *The Life of Macrina* (382),[15] another work that was later entitled *A Refutation of Eunomius's Profession* [*of Faith*] (383) – this is a critique done by Nysses to Eunomius's *Profession of Faith* (383) for emperor Theodosius,[16] *On the Divinity of the Son and On the Holy Spirit* (delivered in 383),[17] *On Not Three Gods* (370–380?),[18] *Against the Pneumatomachoi* (384–385),[19] *Antirrheticus against Appollinarius* (*c.* 385),[20] *To Theophilus* (written at the earliest in 385),[21] *De anima et resurrectione/On the Soul and the Resurrection* (383–384),[22] *The Life of Moses* (391–392)[23] and *The Great Catechechetical Oration* (after 381).

His epistles have been increasingly scrutinized by researchers: John Behr,[24] Neil McLynn[25] and Johannes Zachhuber[26] discuss them in their works. Of particular interest is *Epistle* 38 thought for a long time to have been written by Basil of Caesarea, but attributed by more and more scholars to Gregory of Nyssa; in any case, all editions, including the critical one,[27] introduce it as an epistle between the two brothers on 'the difference between substance and person'. (There is another important extant letter sent by Gregory to his brother Peter, Letter 35, on the distinction between ousia and hypostasis.[28])

Gregory's theology

On the Trinity

In *To Eustathius on the Holy Trinity*,[29] *On Not Three Gods. To Ablabius*[30] and, if we accept it as his, in *Letter 38*,[31] Nyssen expresses his trinitarian position in the vein of Athanasius (293–298)[32]; as we shall see, he refines the view of the Alexandrian. Like Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus, he offers equal status to the Trinity. Even though the Cappadocians did not have identical ideas on all the issues they wrote about, their Christology and their stands concerning the Trinity were common to the three of them.

Figure 55.1 St Gregory of Nyssa, fresco from the fourteenth century, Chora Church, Istanbul. This image (on line) is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 Generic license

Basil and the Gregories maintained that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three eternal *hypostases* (ὑποστάσεις) of the same essence (οὐσία). *Epistle 38* mentioned above 'presents the relation between *ousia* and *hypostasis* in terms similar to those applied to the grammatical distinction between the general and the particular'.[33] Its line of argument clarifies what consubstantiality means for Nyssen: whatever terms indicate the substance of one member in a class, this will apply to the others as well; those members that are described by the same terms in regard to their substance are consubstantial.

When thinking that each member of the Trinity is both a person and an individual entity, it seems that Gregory has in view that each of them has a different role within it. At least this is what the ending of *To Eustathius on the Holy Trinity* suggests:

> Only-begotten God is the Anointed, and the Holy Spirit is His Unction, and the appellation of Anointed points to the Kingly authority, and the anointing is the token of His Kingship, then the Holy Spirit shares also in His dignity. If, therefore, they say that the attribute of Godhead is significative of dignity, and the Holy Spirit is shown to share in this last quality, it follows that He Who partakes in the dignity will also partake in the name which represents it.[34]

On Not Three Gods. To Ablabius emphasizes that there is no difference in nature among the members of Trinity:

> [e]very activity that proceeds from God to creation and is named in accordance with all sorts of ideas begins from Father and proceeds through the Son and is completed into the Holy Spirit. For this reason, the name of the activity is not divided up into the plurality of the agents.
>
> *(GNO III. 1, 47. 21–48.5, Mueller)*

But certainly they are intimately interconnected; it is impossible to think about one without the other; Paul Fides says that they are in a dance of love, a *perichoresis*.[35] Sarah Coakley has coined and operates with the expression 'ordered causality' when she described the dynamics specific to the Trinity.[36]

Many contemporary researchers have analysed Nyssen's stand on the triune nature of God, and on its implications for other theological notions from both Antiquity and modern times.[37] For instance, Johannes Zachhuber considers that 'the innovative Cappadocian settlement to the trinitarian debate provided the backdrop for the first theological theory of the individual cast as a definition of the hypostasis'.[38] To Gregory of Nyssa, individuals are 'the universal nature in its concrete existence'.[39] Trinity as understood by Gregory can be considered a distinctive version of what Marmodoro calls the 'One and Many Problem', 'a chapter in the history of Mereology'.[40] Nyssen, as did the other representatives of the Cappadocian school, 'expanded the Church's understanding of the Trinity by applying Nicene conclusions about Christ to the Holy Spirit'.[41] Thus they countered the Pneumatomachians, who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit.[42] Lucian Turcescu considers that for Gregory, 'The three divine persons know and love each other, are in communion with each other, and freely act together in their common will'.[43] In time Trinity has become a model for social existence and action (in Pavel Florensky's work, for instance[44]) and some theologians opine that Gregory's Trinity can be seen from this angle: among them we can mention Sarah Coakley,[45] Alister E McGrath[46] and John Zizioulas.[47]

Christology

In Gregory's understanding, Christ has two natures: one divine and one human; these are simultaneously united and distinctive. As Morwenna Ludlow indicates,[48] some scholars have treated the divisive aspect,[49] while others have underlined the distinction between the two.[50] The bishop expresses the

union of the two natures of Christ in terms of 'unconfused union'/*henōsis*,[51] 'mixture' and 'fusion'. He expounds, in terms strongly reminiscent of Athanasius, that Christ 'mingled' with humanity and received its nature in order to make possible for "the whole mass of our nature" to be sanctified'.[52] The distinctiveness consists in the fact that the Son is begotten, while the Father has no originator. But they are consubstantial – as the Holy Spirit also is – and all three are coeternal. They constitute the three *hypostasis* of the Godhead.[53] A fragment from the above-mentioned *Letter 38* encapsulates some of this:

> Since then, as says the Lord in the Gospels, he that hath seen the Son sees the Father also; on this account he says that the Only-begotten is the express image of His Father's person. That this may be made still plainer I will quote also other passages of the apostle in which he calls the Son 'the image of the invisible God', and again 'image of His goodness'; not because the image differs from the Archetype according to the definition of indivisibility and goodness, but that it may be shewn that it is the same as the prototype, even though it be different. For the idea of the image would be lost were it not to preserve throughout the plain and invariable likeness. He therefore that has perception of the beauty of the image is made perceptive of the Archetype.[54]

It would be correct to affirm that, at least in part, Gregory's Christology took shape in his dialogue with Apollinarius (*c.* 310–390) and, paradoxically, with one of the latter's opponents, the Arian/Anomoean Eunomius of Cyzicus (d. *c.* 393). In arguments that suggest Nyssen had a solid philosophical education, he explains how it is possible for Christ to be *homoousios* with both God and humans.[55] To briefly present the ideas of his conversants, one should notice that the bishop of Laodicea, in his effort to emphasize Jesus's divinity and the unity of his person, went so far as to deny the existence of a rational human soul (νοῦς) in Christ's human nature. Apollinarius thought that the Son was totally infused by the *Logos* and that his body was a glorified and spiritualized form of humanity. From another perspective, Eunomius (d. *c.* 393) argued that the created nature of Christ is a simple derivation of the uncreated nature of God, which is solely so ('unbegotten'). That while the Son, as Christ himself stated, is 'begotten from the Father'.[56]

To Apollinarius Gregory replied by saying that human nature has a universal as well as an individual character, and that Christ is *homoousios* with us with regard to its universal aspect. It is easy to observe here Gregory's intimate knowledge of Platonic philosophy and the way in which he adapted it to Christian ideas.[57] To Eunomius, Gregory replied that the language of 'cause' and 'of the cause' do not refer to nature, but to the difference concerning the manner of existence. Because of this, the attributes of the Father which we usually express by way of negation (i.e. apophatically) also hold for the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Christopher Beeley commented on Nyssen's belief that Christ's two natures are united but unconfused (a view he shared with Basil and Nazianzen), and inquired as to how Gregory fathomed that some characteristics of both the human and divine nature of Christ can be predicated (one of the issues the bishop of Nyssa tried to elucidate especially in his debate with Eunomius). The scholar from Yale emphasizes one difference between the divine and the human nature that is certain: the former is impassible, while the latter can feel suffering. Additionally, Beeley questions whether the concepts of ousia, hypostasis and eidos as comprehended by Nyssen constitute the basis for a consistent metaphysics, i.e. he queries whether there is a consistent metaphysics to support Gregory's doctrinal position?[58] I believe one can securely answer this in the positive.

The discussion with Eunomius was also an opportunity for Gregory to underline that no philosophical analysis or conceptual derivation can inform about God's nature (*phusis*).[59] He stated that the most appropriate way to refer to it is apophatically (*Against Eunomius* II [953–960, 1101–1108], IV 11 [524]).[60] With this the bishop anticipates Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite's position. Gregory repeatedly asserts that while God is transcendent, some knowledge of him is granted to those open to the manifestation of his *energeiai*/'energies' in the world.

Knowledge of God

Patristic scholars have tried to define Gregory's specific type of mysticism, and they have observed that it is very different from that characteristic of the medieval mystics: it does not involve visions or dreams, but prayers and asceticism.[61] Nevertheless, it is obvious that the fourth-century bishop is not only a believer in knowledge about reality acquired through God's grace; he is also a dialectician. Questions such as 'How . . . can a word of movement come from one that is rest?'; 'How can an immaterial God create matter?'; and 'How is unity related to multiplicity?' abound in his treatises and homilies. Anna Marmodoro, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, Jonathan Hill and Johannes Zachhuber, among others, have analysed Gregory's ontology in the light of possible answers to these conundrums.

As evident from his debate with Eunomius[62] and underlined above, Nyssen thought that God's essence cannot be known, hence the human efforts to express the notion of the Creator through various approximating definitions that rely on observation of how God's 'energies' manifest. These are noticeable in nature as well as in the development of human soul, and are described in the Holy Bible. One way of becoming aware of the existence of the divine energies is by remarking the harmony within the cosmos. The preservation of a balance among contrary forces is, according to Gregory, only possible through God's intervention.[63] As I argued elsewhere, Gregory believed that everything that exists has an inner nature that cannot be immediately known and becomes manifest only through its own energies.[64]

The moral human development which Nyssen calls the 'perpetual progress' (*epektasis*),[65] is another means through which God's *energeiai* are at work. The process involves the cultivation of virtues and expresses the striving of the human being to join God, to become deified.[66] Gregory believed that people can have glimpses of the kingdom to come in the virtue of being made in the divine image; these previews occur in special moments of ecstatic experience (*The Life of Moses*). As observed, such a view placed him in opposition with the Anomoians, especially with Eunomius, who maintained that God can be known by the human mind through logical operations. At the same time, Gregory underlines the importance of human reason in articulating the faith; he considers that human beings progress in their knowledge of both the mundane and the transcendent realities.

Creation

According to Gregory, the world was created by God out of love and as an act of his will. The creation of humans is still happening in God's mind; it will be so until *pleroma* (fullness) is reached. Some contemporary works contest that such a notion exists in Nyssen's corpus; Anna Marmodoro's discussion about how, in Gregory's writings, God as an immaterial entity produces something material given the principle 'like causes like', is relevant from this point of view. The researcher answers this query by saying that through a process of abstraction, Nyssen individuates 'physical aspects of the material objects as definable, intelligible entities'.[67] Most scholars agree Gregory believed that after purification both the souled and un-souled elements of the universe will be saved/restored. This is in consequence of the same divine love that prompted the initial creative action, and that has primacy among the virtues and among the divine commandments.

Gregory avers that initially there were no divisions within creation (of a sexual or of any other kind); they only occurred in consequence of the fall. There will be none at the end of the universe. The lapse of the human being, the only existing rational entity, caused that of the entire cosmos, therefore it is logical to assume that salvation will be both singular and collective. When the world will reach its completion, even this division [between the singular and the collective] will be transcended. His explanation with regard to how such a process takes place is different from that of Origen; Gregory does not believe in the preexistence of the souls and in the pre-cosmic fall (*On the Soul and the Resurrection*). Adamantius thought that before the creation of the material world, *logikoi* or rational intellects (*noes*) existed by themselves (without the support of a body). They were in union

with the Supreme creative *Logos* but eventually, with one exception, they turned away from it and received bodies. The exceptional *logikos* became the human soul of Christ. As for the others, they received bodies in accordance with the degree of their lapse. The holiest souls received light-weight bodies and became angels; those who fell furthest became gruesome demons; those who were in between the two became humans. For Origen, restoration means the return to the initial state of the primordial *henad* that has just been described. Nyssen managed to escape this circularity because for him restoration (*apokatastasis*) does not imply the existence of primordial *logikoi*, and even less that of the episode concerning their fall. In *On the Soul and the Resurrection* he explains that the end:

> [i]s one and only one; it is this: when the complete whole of our race shall have been perfected from the first man to the last, some transformation and obliteration of the properties of human nature (such as mortality) [will take place] – a transformation that only occurs fully after Christ's ascension into heaven.[68]

Freedom of choice for humans was stated before the fourth century – in Origen's writings for instance; the theologian from Alexandria was convinced that God's will shall eventually be consensually accepted by his creation. Gregory of Nyssa is even sounder on this aspect;[69] for him, after purification through 'fire' and the conversion of passions, all – 'from the first man to the last'[70] – will be saved. Mario Baghos finds inconsistencies within the writings of the Cappadocian bishop on the issue of redemption (he thinks that in some passages Gregory affirms universal salvation, but in others not), and advises a reading of this doctrine merely in terms of intentionality. He opines that 'any allusion to universal salvation in St Gregory['s works should be seen] as an expression of God's intention for humanity'.[71] The example Baghos adduces to justify his assertion is Macrina's, i.e. Gregory's, statement in *On the Soul and the Resurrection* that some people are saved 'straightway', i.e. they are purified from evil in this life, while others cleansed hereafter through fire for an 'appropriate length of time'. The researcher then comments that: 'we can choose either to accept or ignore this purification; [that] is confirmed by the saint's many exhortations that we freely undertake the virtuous path'.[72] Ilaria Ramelli agrees that in Gregory's work each person would need a period of purification prior to his or her salvation (depending on the multitude and gravity of each individual's sins), but in the end everyone will align their will to that of God. She observes that since for Gregory every person would eventually accept the good having gone through purification, in his thought free will is compatible with universal salvation.[73] Such an idea made Kallistos Ware posit that, 'if dissociated from speculations about a pre-cosmic fall, a carefully qualified expression of universal hope is acceptable, even within the bounds of strict orthodoxy'.[74]

Anthropology, soteriology/eschatology

As already mentioned, Gregory speaks about a perpetual progress (*ἐπέκτασις*) towards the Beautiful and Good (only two of God's many titles), an ascending movement of the human souls through time into its (the Divine's) infinity. As the bishop states in *On the Making of Man* and *Contra Eunomium*, while the biological processes end at the moment of *apokatastasis*, the moral and spiritual development continues. But the unfolding of this growth, either in a linear or cyclical manner, does not contradict the fact that the kingdom of God, which the transfigured souls will finally reach, is transcendent. This transcendence is to be celebrated because it is the ground for the infinite human ascent to God. Rowan Williams emphasizes that this ascent is possible only through Christ and the Holy Spirit.[75]

Nyssen's knowledge and appreciation of Plato and Origen's writings, of Greek literature, and of the science of his time instilled in him an open-mindedness that allowed his writings to convey some courageous ideas, most notable among them being the last two commented on earlier (the non-existence of divisions within the initial creation, and especially that of universal salvation). On the latter, he said: 'Every one of us will participate "in the blessings which are in Him"'.[76] His conception

was the most daring among all Patristic theories on this issue;[77] nevertheless, the bishop of Nyssa was not reproved for it – as known, Origen greatly suffered for thinking in a similar way. Gregory was probably spared because he was Basil's brother.[78]

In another text that focuses on salvation and deification, *The Great Catechechetical Oration*, Gregory holds that instrumental in those processes is not only the personal relation with God, but also the daily exercise of love towards fellow humans. According to him, redemption means that everything is continually transfigured, and that includes human emotions (which manifest themselves in the soul, but are not of the soul). Hence those that are negative can be employed for positive purposes: fury and jealousy, for instance, can be used to energize someone to act, and their performance can lead to good deeds (*On the Making of Man*). The final thing to be surpassed is death.

Gregory of Nyssa and the science of his time

In some of his writings, especially in *An Apology for The Hexaemeron*, Gregory engaged with the contemporary Hellenistic theories concerning the natural world. He did not hesitate to utilize ideas of his time that explained the creation of the universe as long as these did not contradict his belief, in line with the biblical account, in a universe created by God. He accommodated coeval philosophical insights and scientific data – drawn from physics and cosmology – into his theological accounts, thus continuing the dialogue with contemporary culture initiated by earlier Christian apologists.

As already suggested when referring to the *logikos* of every created element, Nyssen believed that the ability to create was conferred not only to humans, but also to the non-human universe; this has generative energies. In order to account for this inherent capacity of creation to unfold by itself over time, Gregory adapted and elaborated further the theory of *logoi spermatikoi*, originally put forward by the Stoics, and taken over by Plotinus (204/5–270) and the Christian writers of the second century. The theory, also circulated by Augustine via the Latin cognate terms of *rationes seminales/causales*, enjoyed a widespread popularity in the theological circles during the following centuries and was further developed. What is of paramount importance is that for Gregory matter is not inert but possesses energies that allow it to develop and further generate. In his work he employed elements from the natural philosophy of his age and adopted the seminal reason concept in order both to understand and explain why such a dignity was bestowed on the matter, and to expound the teleological progression of the universe. Such ideas explain those of determinism and freedom.

It might be the case that modern theories of evolution and theologies of creation can be accommodated within the theological framework proposed by Gregory. His natural theology, by assimilating the scientific knowledge of his era, could constitute a model for other theologians who might be able to understand that there should not be an antagonism between natural philosophy and religion, and that theology can dialogue with scientific enquiry.

Nyssen and language

Gregory is concerned with the semantic phenomena at work in his texts; he is aware that the capacity of human language to capture the richness of divine reality is limited. That especially in discussions concerning the Trinity and issues such as the nature of the universals.[79] There is currently a tendency to look for a theory of language in Gregory of Nyssa's writings. Among others, Beeley,[80] Radde-Gallwitz, Behr and Cassin[81] elaborate on predications concerning God's nature and the role of nouns in elaborating on the distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis*.[82] Sarah Coakley pays attention to Gregory's use of gendered language.[83]

Gregory of Nyssa and Byzantium

Gregory and the other two representatives of the Cappadocian school greatly contributed to the development of Byzantine culture. They did so in various ways, one of them being the adaptation

of Platonic categories to Christian realities. Concepts such as beauty and goodness, which constitute the subject of the dialogues penned by the Greek philosopher, are deployed by the bishop of Nyssa to explain the relationship between image and archetype. Because of this, David Bradshaw considers that Nyssen, as well as Basil and Nazianzen, assumed an 'iconic' outlook of life that became defining for the empire. He also thinks that the notions concerning the realization of the divine image within people are a part of the same ideatic process.

Scholarly afterlife of Nyssen's ideas

As previously mentioned, many of Gregory of Nyssa's notions are still the focus of academic preoccupations and debates today; that is especially true with regard to his Christology and trinitarian position. In the twentieth century, Jean Daniélou and Hans Urs Balthasar[84] made Gregory a subject of theological, philosophical and historical research in the twentieth century. Contemporary theological discussions led by theologians such as Christopher A. Beeley, John Behr, Paul M. Blowers, Hans Boersma, Mark Edwards, Sr. Nonna Verna Harrison, Jonathan Hill, Morwenna Ludlow, L. F. Mateo-Seco and G. Maspero, Anthony Meredith, Ilaria Ramelli, Kallistos Ware, Johannes Zachhuber, John Zizioulas and others keep Nyssen in the centre of scholarly discussions. It is interesting to emphasize that in the twenty-first century, his ideas form the bases of themes not only in theological, but also in philosophical and historical conversations through, for instance, the publications authored by Sarah Coakley, Anna Marmodoro, Neil B. McLynn, Richard Sorabji and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz.

Notes

1 Gregory attended a council of Constantinople in 394; his name appears there between that of the metropolitans of Caesarea and Iconium, Gregory of Nyssa, *Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, etc.*, ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace; trans. W. Moore and H. A. Wilson, NPNF, second series; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983, vol. 5. 8. After that event there are no records concerning Nyssen. See Silvas 2007b, *Gregory of Nyssa. The Letters: Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, Leiden, The Netherlands and Boston, MA: Brill, *Vigiliae Christianae*, Supplements 83, 57. Also Pierre Maraval, 'La date de la mort de Basile de Cesaree', *Revue d'études augustiniennes*, 1988: 25–38.
2 See Silvas 2007a: 5. Also Van Dam 2003: 1.
3 Silvas 2007b: 5.
4 Ludlow 2000: 21.
5 Silvas, 'Introduction. Was Gregory of Nyssa married?', 2007b: 16–25. Also Daniélou 1956: 71–8 and Karras 2005: 111–21.
6 Silvas 2007b: 6. Most of Gregory's biographical information here was taken from Ludlow 2000 and Silvas 2007b.
7 The Arian emperor Valens died in the catastrophic battle of Adrianople on 9 August 378, and was succeeded by the Orthodox emperor, Theodosius I, who ruled 379–395.
8 Gregory was also called 'Luminary of Nyssa'; see Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos, *Ecclesiastical History*, xi. 201, in J.-P. Migne (i.e. his 'accurante'), *Patrologia Graeca* 146. 725B, Paris: Bibliothecae cleri universae, 1865 (PG 146. 725B); 1865: xi. 201.
9 Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa. The Letters*, pp. 50–1. See also J. Daniélou 1955.
10 Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa. The Letters*, p. 52.
11 Idem., p. 52.
12 See note 1.
13 Silvas 2007b: 49–53 (Silvas dates *Contra Eunomium* ll to the year 382, Contra Eunomium lll between 382–383, and Contra Eunomium lV between 383–384); Cassin 2014: 3 dates *Contra Eunomium* l to 378; he attributes the other books of *Contra Eunomium* to dates close to those proposed by Silvas (Cassin 2014: 3–4).
14 Silvas 2007b: 52.
15 Gregory of Nyssa 1952: 370–414; Maraval 1971; Silvas 2007a.
16 Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa, The Letters*, p. 51–2. M. Cassin, in his *Contre Eunome lll: une introduction*, dates it 'after the summer of 383', pp. 3–4.
17 Silvas 2007b: 50.
18 See Gregory of Nyssa/F. Mueller/*W. Jaeger* (ed.) 1958: 37–57, trans. 1893: 331–6. See also Ayres 2004 and 2006; and Karfikova 2011: 131–68.

19 Silvas 2014: 51.
20 Gregory of Nyssa/W. Jaeger (ed.) 1960; Gregory of Nyssa/Callahan/J. W. Jaeger (ed.), *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, 8. 1, 1952: 370–414; Maraval 1971.
21 Silvas *Gregory of Nyssa, The Letters*, 2007: 53–4.
22 Silvas 2007b: 51 (cf. Daniélou; he believes that *On the Soul and the Resurrection* was written in the winter of 383–384).
23 Silvas 2007b: 55.
24 Behr 2004, vol. 2: 415–27.
25 Neil B. McLynn 'The two Gregories: Nyssen and Nazianzen', paper at the Seminar 'Gregory of Nyssa: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives', 25 May 2016. During Trinity term 2016, Anna Marmodoro and Neil B. McLynn hosted this seminar dedicated to Nyssen in Corpus Christi College, University of Oxford.
26 Zachhuber 2003: 73–90.
27 Gregory of Nyssa?/Basil Magni/the Great 380s; Courtonne 1957: 81–93, vol. 1; Wace and Schaff (eds) 1895: 137–41. See also Deferrari 2014: 196–227, vol. 1. As mentioned, this epistle has been discussed, among others, by Zachhuber 2003: 73–90; Fedwick 1978: 31–51; Maspero *et al*. 2014: 579–94 (the authors of the article conclude that the letter was 'very probably' written by Nyssen) and Turcescu 2003: 97–110.
28 Gregory of Nyssa 378–380. See Silvas 2007b: 249–59; commentary 247–49. See also Behr 2004: 415–27, vol. 2, and Turcescu 1977: 63–82.
29 Gregory of Nyssa. Mueller/*W. Jaeger* (ed.) 1958; trans. Wace and Schaff (eds) 1893: 527–48.
30 Gregory of Nyssa. Mueller/*W. Jaeger* (ed.) 1958; trans. Wace and Schaff (eds) 1958: 37–57 trans. Wace and Schaff (eds) 1893: 331–6. See Ayres 2004 and 2006; Karfikova 2011: 131–68.
31 Gregory of Nyssa?/Basil Magni/the Great? 380s; Courtonne 1957: 81–93, vol. 1; trans. Wace and Schaff (eds) 1895: 137–41. See also Deferrari 2014: 196–227.
32 Maspero 2014: 401–29.
33 Behr 2004, vol. 2: 415.
34 Gregory of Nyssa. Mueller/*W. Jaeger* (ed.) 1958; trans. Wace and Schaff (eds) 1893: 330.
35 Fiddes 2000.
36 Sarah Coakley 'Introduction' in S. Coakley (ed.) 2003.
37 Zachhuber 2003: 73–90; Stead 1990: 149–63, 1981: 170–91; Turcescu 2003: 97–110.
38 Zachhuber 2014: 97.
39 Idem., p. 99.
40 Anna Marmodoro, 'Gregory of Nyssa on the Trinity', paper at the Seminar 'Gregory of Nyssa: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives', 8 June 2016. During Trinity term 2016, Anna Marmodoro and Neil B. McLynn hosted this seminar dedicated to Nyssen in Corpus Christi College, University of Oxford.
41 Papandrea 2012: 210.
42 Meredith 1999.
43 Turcescu 2005.
44 Florensky 1997.
45 Coakley 2002; Coakley (ed.) 2003.
46 McGrath 2011 [1994].
47 Zizioulas 1985.
48 Ludlow 2007: 97–107 (especially).
49 Kelly 1977: 299.
50 Sorabji 1988: 120.
51 Gregory *of Nysa/Jaeger (3. 1)* 1958: 184.
52 Idem. 151, 16–20. For a commentary on Gregory's Christology see Daley 1997: 87–96 and 2002: 469–88.
53 In a recent talk given in Oxford, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz presented Gregory's 'ways of understanding what the name "deity" (θεότης) means in his opinion. It is worth mentioning it here because it introduces a new idea; "deity" could be taken either as a nature-name or as an activity-name. Nyssen prefers to take it as an activity-name, though he also entertains the former hypothetically since it is the majority view'; A. Radde-Gallwitz, *Gregory of Nyssa and the three Gods problem*, paper delivered at the Patristic Seminar, Christ Church, University of Oxford, June 2016; (I have his permission to include his thoughts here). Ayres 2003: 15–44.
54 Basil of Caesarea/Gregory of Nysa? 1986: 141; Courtonne 1957: 91–2.
55 *Gregory of Nysa/W. Jaeger, ed*. 1960: 953–60, 1101–8, and 2014: 524, trans. Wace and Schaff (eds) 1893: 35–314.
56 Eunomius/Vaggione 1987.
57 Turcescu 2005.
58 Beeley 2016.
59 Gregory *of Nysa*/Friedrich Mueller/*W. Jaeger* (ed.) 1958: 131–233. See contemporary comments on it in Daley 1997: 87–96.

60 For a general discussion on the apophatic method in Christianity, see Turner 1995, the last reprint 1999.
61 Louth 2007; McGinn 2004; Musurillo 1979; Edwards, 'Allegory and Mysticism in Gregory of Nyssa', paper at the Seminar 'Gregory of Nyssa: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives', Corpus Christi College, University of Oxford, 27 April, 2016.
62 Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* II [984–985, 1009, 1069]; *Great Catechism* 'Prologue' [12], 12 [44]; *Hexameron* [73]; *Life of Moses* II 168 [377–80]; *Ecclesiastes* I [624], II [644–5]; *Song of Songs* I [781–4], XI [1009–13], XIII [1049–52]; *Beatitudes* VI [1268]).
63 Heine 1995 and 1997: 130–6.
64 Ene D-Vasilescu 2013: 151–69.
65 Blowers 1992: 151–71.
66 Ene D-Vasilescu 2016.
67 Marmodoro 2015: 110.
68 Gregory of Nyssa/Wace and Schaff 1893: 639.
69 Harrison 1992.
70 Gregory of Nyssa/Wace and Schaff 1893: 639.
71 Baghos 2012: 125–62.
72 Idem.
73 Ramelli 2013: 433–4.
74 Ware 2004: 206, vol. 1.
75 Williams 1979: 58. He affirms that this ascent is possible only through Christ and the Holy Spirit. See also McGuckin 2009.
76 Gregory of Nyssa/Wace and Schaff 1893: 639.
77 Constas 2014: 139–63.
78 Ware 2004, vol. 1: 206.
79 Radde-Gallwitz 2009a.
80 Beeley 2012.
81 Cassin 2013: 41–67.
82 Behr 2004, vol. 2: 415–27.
83 Coakley (ed.) 2003.
84 Von Balthasar 1995.

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56
JEROME

Dennis Brown

Life and context

St. Jerome, in some quarters seen as the greatest doctor of the church, is chiefly remembered as one of the most forceful personalities and one of the most important interpreters of the Bible in the early centuries of Christianity. Jerome was born in the early 340s CE in the town of Stridon, in Dalmatia, modern day Croatia. He died in 420, renowned for his exegetical and translation activities, and for living a holy and ascetic life.

Jerome was born into a well-off Christian family. In one of his early letters (*Ep.* 3.5), Jerome recalls running through the slave quarters of his home and being looked after by foster-nurses and a personal attendant. In Stridon, he attended the *ludus litterarius* or elementary school, the normal age for which was 6 to 11 or 12 years of age. Jerome would have learned how to read and write here, as well as elementary arithmetic. He may also have picked up the rudiments of Greek. It must also have been at Stridon that Jerome began to train his astonishingly retentive memory, which was later to prove very useful in his scholarly activities.

Jerome was sent to Rome for his secondary education, to one of the most famous teachers of his age – Aelius Donatus. The curriculum would have included some mathematics, science and music, but was principally concerned with the rules of grammar, particularly the correct analysis and use of language, and classical literature. The favourite authors were Vergil the poet and founder of liberal Latin culture; Terence the comic playwright; Sallust the historian; and Cicero the stylist, orator and philosopher. Jerome obviously loved his time in Rome, for his works are full of quotations from and allusions to classical literature. At the age of about 15 or 16 Jerome would have graduated to a Roman school of rhetoric, where he would have learned the art of public speaking, with a view, perhaps, to entering a career in advocacy or the civil service. Jerome's later writings show how well he learned the art of rhetoric, for instance, its stylized procedures, its stock emotional phrases and its tendency to exaggeration (*Commentary on Galatians* 2.1). His education provided the foundation upon which he was to base all his later work.

Jerome and asceticism

Though education was perhaps the single most important aspect of Jerome's personality, it was not the only one. He was a fervent supporter of asceticism. After finishing his Roman education, Jerome travelled widely. He seems to have become interested in the ascetic life while in Trier, which had

become an important centre for monasticism. He soon decided to withdraw to the desert at Chalcis in northern Syria, to experience first hand the spiritual life offered by a colony of hermits. His sojourn in the desert lasted only two or three years, but the desire to lead a holy and ascetic life stayed with him and became part of his life-long quest.

He moved to Aquileia in *c.* 375 CE, but left there in 377 and travelled widely for the next five years. At this point he returned to Rome, taking up residence in the city under the patronage of pope Damasus. He served as secretary to Damasus from 382 to 385. During this time, Jerome became widely known for his advocacy of monasticism, and he gathered a number of disciples, some of whom were noble-born women. He studied the Bible and asceticism with them, meeting in the house of Marcella on the Aventine. His association with this group of women met a deep-seated need in his personality. His correspondence with them reveals a great deal about his warm sympathies, his skill at adapting himself to their different interests, and his ability to gain a stronghold over several of them, particularly the wealthy widow Paula and her daughter Eustochium.

Following the death of Damasus in 385, Jerome's influence in Rome waned and he was forced to leave, but he was accompanied by Paula and Eustochium. The group visited many of the sacred sites in the Holy Land and Egypt. Their route was recorded by Jerome in *Epistle 108* and in his *Apology against Rufinus*. In these travels, Jerome learned much about the topography of the sites important to Christian history and this information was to be very useful to him in his exegesis of both Testaments, particularly when he interpreted the literal sense of texts. He also wrote a trilogy of books, in part based on his travels, which informed his exegetical studies. These were the *Book of the*

Figure 56.1 *St. Jerome Reading in the Countryside*, Giovanni Bellini, 1505. National Gallery of Art, Washington. Wikicommons

Interpretations of Hebrew Names, the *On Sites and Names of Hebrew Places*, and the *Hebrew Questions on the Book of Genesis*. These were largely etymological books, whose type had a long history not only in Christianity but also in Judaism and Paganism.

Jerome and the group of women finally settled in Bethlehem after their travels. Paula provided the finance to build two monasteries, one for men under the guidance of Jerome, and one for women, over which Paula presided. Jerome formulated rules of monastic living for both communities, and remained here for the rest of his long life. He became a champion for the ideal of virginity, not just for monks but for lay Christians too. He died there in 420 and his remains rest in St. Catherine's church in Bethlehem.

Jerome as biblical interpreter and translator

The Roman empire in which Jerome lived was in a period of rapid change. The Christian emperor, Constantine the Great, had pushed through policies that favoured Christianity, and many churches were built throughout the empire. Constantine's benevolent actions, and those of his successors, had a dramatic effect on the church. Instead of persecution, the church now enjoyed many privileges and it increasingly gained an influential role in society. Christianity was becoming more and more popular and respectable, and consequently people were streaming into the church. One result of this was that the Christian population wanted to learn more about the scriptures, and scholars like Jerome had the important function of providing commentaries to explain the biblical books.

Previous biblical interpretation

Jerome inherited a long tradition of biblical interpretation, both Jewish and Christian. In Judaism, rabbinic scholars had developed a system of interpretative rules and techniques for studying biblical texts. These may be broadly classified as haggadah and halakhah. Haggadah ('information' or 'anecdote') is seen largely in collections of midrash (a kind of commentary on scripture) and often takes the form of moral exegesis. Various techniques were used to achieve this, including juxtaposing originally discrete biblical texts, creative elaboration of the biblical narrative and the use of parable. This method could create profound theological insights. Jerome used a great deal of haggadic material in his works and he was an important source through which echoes of the haggadah reached some of the western Church Fathers. Halakah ('procedure') was concerned with ensuring that the Torah could be successfully adapted to the changing conditions in Jewish life. Jerome often used this halakhic principle in his own exegesis of scripture.

One Jewish scholar who found favour with Jerome was Philo of Alexandria. He calls Philo an 'ecclesiastical' writer, on the grounds that Philo praises Christians at Alexandria and mentions that Christianity is present in other provinces (Jerome, *De Viris illustribus* 11). Philo had been aware of haggadic and halakhic traditions, but found that the 'impossibilities' and 'absurdities' produced by a literal reading of the texts could be unravelled by using an allegorical method based on Stoic ethics and Platonic cosmology. By searching carefully in scripture for clues like contradictions, odd expressions, word derivations and mysterious numbers, the interpreter could discover the 'real' message which God intended to convey.

This allegorical interpretation spread from Philo into Christianity and became widely used by the catechetical school at Alexandria, especially by its two foremost representatives, Clement and Origen. For Clement, most of scripture was expressed in enigmas, and it was the task of the interpreter who had received the deeper knowledge (gnosis) given by Christ to his apostles after the resurrection, to unlock the spiritual truth of biblical language to those who could understand. Following Philo, Clement allegorized the Old Testament freely. His hermeneutical principle for identifying true meaning was an eclectic mix of Hellenistic (and gnostic) cosmology, soteriology and morality, combined with the conviction that in the Logos-Christ, all foreshadowing of truth had found its goal.

Jerome learned a great deal from Origen. Much of Origen's literary output was devoted to biblical interpretation. Jerome classified this into three categories: scholia (short explanatory glosses), commentaries and homilies. Origen had wanted to show, in his *De Principiis*, how the world's diversity came about and how it would eventually return to a divine unity. The interpretation of scripture was fundamental to this project. Scripture was divinely inspired so they had a spiritual purpose. To give them a simplistic understanding was to insult their divine author. Origen argued that all biblical texts had a spiritual sense but not always a literal one. To gain the spiritual truth in a text, it was sometimes necessary to use allegory. This method would unlock the hidden, symbolic meaning of texts, and Origen made allegory the dominant method of biblical interpretation until the Middle Ages. Jerome was at least partly responsible for ensuring that Origen's writings and his allegorical method were transmitted throughout the western church.

Not all Christian scholars were convinced that Origen's allegorical method was correct. The exegetical 'school' of Antioch developed in reaction to the allegorizing tendencies of Alexandria. The school's early history is associated with the name of Lucian, the teacher of Arius, but the most influential Antiochenes were Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia and John Chrysostom. The Antiochenes insisted on the historical basis of the biblical text and that, wherever possible, it ought to be understood literally. Only where this could not be achieved should typology and allegory be deployed. The Antiochene emphasis on the literal or historical understanding may be seen in Lucian's emphasis on the details of the biblical text. He knew Hebrew and corrected the Septuagint by using the Hebrew text. Jerome praised his recension and used it widely in his own work on the biblical text.

Jerome and Hebrew

Before it was possible to interpret the biblical text properly, it was necessary to have the best text available. The inescapable conclusion for Jerome was that he had to learn the original biblical languages. As far as the New Testament was concerned, Jerome encountered no problems, for he had learned Greek at school, and had attended the lectures of Gregory of Nazianzus in Constantinople. But for the text of the Old Testament, Jerome was faced with a considerable hurdle for, apart from Origen, very few other Christian scholars had any knowledge of Hebrew. Jerome took lessons in Hebrew from a Jewish convert to Christianity, and it is clear that he found it a difficult language to master. It must be remembered that no grammars or concordances were available, so he had to learn the language orally, memorizing the sounds of the consonants and vocabulary. Presumably, he practised writing the Hebrew characters by copying out manuscripts. Of his Hebrew studies, Jerome says: 'What labour I spent on this task, what difficulties I went through, how often I despaired and how often I gave up and in my eagerness to learn, started again' *(Epistle* 125.12).

Jerome believed, along with the rest of the ancient Jewish and Christian world, that Hebrew was the world's original language. Despite its antiquity, however, Jerome found Hebrew a barbarous language, which affected his Latin style. In the preface to his *Commentary on Galatians*, Jerome apologizes for his unliterary style, blaming it partly on eye trouble and problems with copyists, but also on his study of Hebrew: 'I leave it to others to judge how far my unflagging study of Hebrew has profited me; what I have lost in my own language, I can tell'.

It is clear that Jerome had a much more extensive and profound knowledge of Hebrew than did any other Christian scholar, including Origen. Jerome had the same quantitative use of Hebrew as did Origen, but he added to it a qualitative use of Hebrew as a guide to the right *meanings* (Barr 1966: 282). This qualitative use of Hebrew manifests itself in various ways. The very fact, for instance, that Jerome undertook the task of translating the Old Testament from Hebrew points towards his possessing a high degree of ability in Hebrew. Even bearing in mind that he had the previous Greek translations of Theodotion, Symmachus and especially of Aquila, which must have been of considerable value to him, Jerome's own translation from the Hebrew was a quite remarkable achievement, especially when

it is seen to be a generally accurate and faithful one. A second way of showing Jerome's extensive understanding of Hebrew is to look at his vocalizations of Hebrew. The Hebrew text with which Jerome worked would have been unpointed (that is, without vowels). This means that distinctions in meaning could be brought about by different vocalizations of the same consonants. The following example comes from Jerome's *Commentary on Jeremiah*:

> The Hebrew word, which is written with the three letters 'd-b-r' (it has no vowels in it) according to the natural progression of the passage and the judgement of the reader, if 'dabar' is read it means 'word'; if 'deber', it means 'death'; and if 'dabber', it means 'speak'. *(9.22)*

In an unvocalized text, all three words (*dabar*, *deber* and *dabber*) would have been identical in Hebrew. It would only have been possible to discern the correct grammatical construction (the first two are nouns. the third a verb) and the meaning of the word by studying its position in the sentence. In this example, Jerome is combating the incorrect translations of this word that had appeared in the Greek versions, which implied different vocalizations. The Septuagint omitted the word: Origen's *Hexapala* had interpreted it as 'death'; Aquila had understood it as 'speak', as had Symmachus. It has been suggested that Jerome may have been influenced here by the Jewish *al-tikre* interpretation (Barr 1966: 282). This means 'do not read {the word in the text} but {another similar one}'. It was a midrashic technique used to introduce alternative readings to a text for purely homiletical purposes. It was understood as a legitimate extension of the literal exegesis of a passage. It seems unlikely in this case, as, if Jerome had been using this technique, he would have used the different possibilities of vocalization in his own interpretation. It is more likely that Jerome is merely revelling in his good knowledge of Hebrew and showing off to his Christian readers by exhibiting his mastery of the language. It was this extensive knowledge of Hebrew that helped Jerome so much in his major task of translating the Bible from its original languages.

Textual criticism

As an essential part of producing an accurate translation of the Bible, Jerome had to be assured that he was working with the best possible text. Jerome, more than any other Church Father of the first five centuries, was very well versed in principles and techniques of textual criticism (Hulley 1944). It is largely due to his labours in this area that scholars today can ascertain accurately the state of the text of the Old Testament, Septuagint, Hexapla and New Testament in the fourth century.

Jerome acquired an interest in manuscripts and books early in his adult life. Before the end of his formal education, he had made copies of classical authors, and soon after he left Rome, he laboriously copied out Hilary of Poitier's commentaries on the Psalms and the *De Synodis*. During his travels, Jerome collected many manuscripts of biblical and other material. One of the most advantageous from this point of view was his visit to the famous library at Caesarea, which had been assembled by the priest and martyr Pamphilus, friend of Eusebius of Caesarea. Jerome relates that Pamphilus was so impassioned with sacred literature that he himself transcribed the greater part of the works of Origen, and these are still preserved today in the library at Caesarea (*De viris illustribus* 3).

Jerome became very attached to the manuscripts he had collected and took them with him when he moved from place to place. In a letter to Paul of Concordia Jerome suggested that they could make a mutually beneficial arrangement, whereby Jerome would send Paul a copy of his newly composed treatise, the *Life of Paul the Hermit*, if, in return, Paul who owned a substantial library himself would provide Jerome with copies of several books, including the commentaries of Fortunatian, the *History of Aurelius Victor* and the letters of Novatian, so that Jerome might increase his personal collection. Unfortunately, we do not know whether the deal was closed and the books exchanged (see *Ep*. 22.30 and *Ep*. 10.3).

Textual criticism is fundamentally concerned with variant readings in texts. Jerome realized this and asked where these variant readings came from and why they arose. As far as Jerome was concerned, the text critic's task was to remove any errors in the text and to establish a trustworthy one. Careless or incompetent copyists produced many errors – either accidentally or intentionally. Jerome observed that some copyists did not pay attention to their work and even went to sleep over it, or they carelessly changed the reading, writing not what was in front of them, but what they understood. So, at *Commentary on Matthew 13:35*, Jerome noted that the copyist wrote 'Isaiah' instead of 'Asaph', because the former name was more familiar to him and he believed the previous copyist to have been mistaken. In addition to general comments about the causes of errors in texts, Jerome frequently mentioned detailed causes of corruption. Punctuation, for example, was very important for understanding a passage correctly, and faulty punctuation may be a cause of error. The confusion of number symbols was another cause of error. Jerome made the interesting suggestion that the reason why the evangelist Mark seems to disagree with Matthew and John about the exact time of Jesus' crucifixion was due to a copyist's error. Jerome says that the copyist confused the number symbols 'S' and 'Y' and therefore produced an error in the text (*Tractatus in Psalms* 77). Jerome also mentions that copyists could easily confuse similar letters.

Most of his references to this relate to the confusion of Hebrew letters by the translators of the Septuagint, especially the letters *resh* and *daleth*, distinguished only by a small stroke, and the letters *yad* and *vau*, which differ, he says, only in size. Also noticed by Jerome are occasional examples of dittography and haplography, metathesis of letters, assimilation, omission of words and transposition (Brown 1993: 36–7).

One of the areas Jerome would have to approach in writing a commentary on a biblical book was that of authorship, and the authenticity or otherwise of sections of particular books. Although he does not use the terms, Jerome utilizes two criteria for deciding on these issues: internal and external evidence. With regard to external evidence, one method of ensuring the authenticity of a writing is the *subscriptio*. The apostle Paul, Jerome reported, had used his signature along with a few words, to take away from false teachers any opportunity of tampering with his own doctrines (*Commentary on Galatians 6:11*). The subscription, however, was not a very good criterion by which to judge a book's authenticity. The signature could be forged or imitated. Another criterion was the *anulus signatarius*, or 'seal' which one put on letters or other works.

Jerome attaches great value to the internal evidence in a work when it comes to verifying its authenticity. First, one must determine whether the contents are consistent with those of its supposed author. For instance, with a book by the Pythagorean author and philosopher, Sixtus, whom Jerome's erstwhile friend Rufinus equates with the Christian martyr, Sixtus, Jerome applies this criterion and establishes that in the entire volume there is no mention of Christ or the apostles. How, then, could it have been written by a Christian martyr (see the preface to his *Commentary on Philemon*)?

When Jerome discusses the suspicions concerning the authorship of the Letter to Philemon, he again uses the criterion of internal evidence. Certain contemporary critics held that it was not Pauline because of its brevity, its seemingly inferior subject matter, and its mundane tone. Jerome, however, argues strongly that if this letter is rejected because of its brevity, then others must also be rejected – for instance Obadiah, Nahum and Zephaniah. He also states that brevity in a document which has in it so much of the beauty of the gospel, is a sign of its inspiration. Further, many of the other (undisputed) epistles mention mundane, worldly matters, like the cloak left at Troas (2 Tim. 4:13). To suppose that common life is distinct and separate from God is to approach the heresy of Manichaeanism, Jerome warns. Should these powerful arguments based on internal evidence not be enough to convince some people, Jerome also uses one piece of external evidence – he says that Marcion, who altered many of the epistles of Paul, did not touch the letter to Philemon, believing it to be genuinely by Paul. If even Marcion believed it to be authentic, Jerome says, then no orthodox Christian should have any reason to doubt it (Preface to the *Commentary on Philemon*).

Jerome never discusses his principles of textual criticism systematically, and this is really because he saw the text critic's task to be a practical one of establishing the correct text. Without the correct text, it was impossible to have any real understanding of its meaning, and this was of paramount importance for Jerome. For his understanding of scripture, this meant that textual criticism preceded the task of translating the biblical texts, and it was only when both of these had been accomplished that true understanding would be achieved.

The Vulgate translation

Jerome was, as he himself says, a *vir trilinguis*, knowing Hebrew, Greek and Latin. One of the greatest achievements for which Jerome is remembered is the translation of the Bible known as the 'Vulgate'. This term comes from the Latin 'vulgata' meaning common. It is used of the Latin version of the Bible followed by the Roman Catholic church, often attributed to Jerome. He used the term himself to refer to his own translation of the Bible, because he wanted to make the scriptural texts available to everyone, not just to scholars who could understand Greek and Hebrew (Sutcliffe 1948: 250). Jerome, more than any other person, was responsible for fixing the literary form of the Bible of the entire western church. The complicated history of the Vulgate translation and Jerome's involvement in it began in 383, when pope Damasus came to the conclusion that because of the proliferation of variant readings in the Latin Bible of the day, a thorough revision was needed. For this task, he commissioned Jerome. Although we do not have the actual words of his commission, we get a very clear idea of his wishes from Jerome's *Preface to the Four Gospels*. He says:

> You urge me to compose a new work from the old, and, as it were, to sit in judgement on the copies of the scriptures which are now scattered throughout the world; and, insofar as they differ from one another, you would have me decide which of them agree with the Greek original. The labour is one of love but at the same time dangerous and presumptuous; for in judging others I must in turn be judged by all; and how can I change the language of the world at this late stage, and carry it back to its early childhood? Is there a man learned or otherwise, who, when he takes the volume in his hands and sees that what he reads does not suit his settled tastes, will not break out immediately into violent language and call me a forger and a profane person for having had the audacity to add anything to the ancient books, or to make any changes or corrections to them?

Jerome, however, was prepared to risk castigation in this way for two reasons. First, he explains, is the pope's command. Second, was the great diversity of Old Latin manuscripts. He exclaims that there were 'almost as many forms of texts as there are manuscripts'. Jerome's younger contemporary, Augustine, confirms this when he laments:

> Those who translated the scriptures from Hebrew into Greek may be counted, but the Latin translators are without number. For in early days of the faith, every man who happened to get hold of a Greek manuscript (of the New Testament) and who imagined he had any facility in both languages, however slight that might have been, dared to make a translation.
>
> *(*De doctrina Christiana *2.16)*

Jerome's and Augustine's statements were not mere hyperbole, but based on sound factual information. The Old Latin version was begun in the second century, simultaneously in Africa and western Europe. By the fourth century, it existed in a bewildering number of forms, showing a huge number of variant readings. This was partly because different scholars had undertaken the task of translation at different times in different areas, and partly because of errors in translation and careless transcription.

The Latin of these early versions was very odd, as the language was adapted to Christian usage, with special vocabulary created for the new translation (Brown 1993: 98–9). The idiom of this form of Latin often recalled the Greek on which the Christian vocabulary was based, and, because it was written for uneducated people, it had a strong colloquial feel (Metzger 1977: 285–330).

Jerome's statement concerning the many text-types of the Old Latin version would also seem to be substantiated, for the modern scholarly consensus distinguishes four main text-types among Old Latin manuscripts: African, European, Italian and Spanish.

Faced with a bewildering array of variant readings and different text-types, Jerome prepared to carry out Pope Damasus' wish to revise the Latin Bible and create (or re-create) a uniform text. Naturally enough, he began his revision with the four Gospels. Pope Damasus did not commission Jerome to make a *fresh translation* of the Bible, but Jerome found himself checking the accuracy of the Latin text by referring constantly to the Greek original. He was conscious, however, of his commission to *revise* the existing Old Latin version, and changed this text only when it was necessary. He finished his revision of the Gospels and presented it to the pope in 384, shortly before the latter's death.

That Jerome revised the four Gospels is certain. Less certain, however, is how much of the remainder of the Old Latin New Testament he revised. In *On Famous Men* and elsewhere, he claims to have restored the New Testament to its Greek original. Scholars have expressed opposing views on Jerome's statement. Some, notably Dom J. Chapman (1923), believed that Jerome did, in fact, revise the whole of the New Testament. Chapman argued that Jerome's quotations from Paul in *Epistle 27* showed his intention of publishing a revision of the Pauline epistles soon and that the lack of prefaces to the New Testament other than the Gospels could be explained easily: because the pope for whom Jerome was making the revision died soon after the Gospels had been revised, Jerome did not wish to write prefaces to anyone else. Chapman also attempted to explain why Jerome's quotations from the Pauline epistles often differ from those in the Vulgate: he often quotes readings with which he disagrees and he may have thought a certain reading to be a fairly good one, his own suggestion being meant only to explain the real force of the Greek, not to serve as a tolerable Latin rendering. Jerome is often inconsistent anyway, and the differences between the Vulgate readings and those found in Jerome's works do not necessarily prove that he was not the author of the Vulgate of the Pauline epistles. Chapman cites examples from the Gospels that vary from the Vulgate. Those who argue that Jerome did not revise the text of the Pauline epistles because his quotations differ from the Vulgate, must also conclude that he did not revise the text of the Gospels, which is absurd. Stylistically, he says, the Vulgate New Testament is the work of a single author and that author must be Jerome. Furthermore, Jerome is always accurate when enumerating his own works, so when he says he had revised the whole New Testament, he must have done. Chapman dates the revision of the complete New Testament to 391.

Other scholars have seriously questioned this traditional belief that Jerome revised the text of the complete New Testament. F. Cavallera made a detailed study of the Vulgate of Acts, the Pauline epistles and Revelation and noted especially the discrepancies between the Vulgate and quotations in Jerome's work (1922). Sometimes Jerome employs a text that coincides more or less with the Vulgate, but more often he quotes one that differs. Sometimes he rejects readings which are found in the Vulgate. It is very important in this context that in his commentaries on Galatians, Ephesians, Philemon and Titus written *c.* 387, shortly after his supposed revision of these letters, he never attributes the Latin text he uses to himself, but, on the contrary, often uses the phrase '*Latinus interpres*' of the translator. He sometimes disagrees with their readings. More recently J. N. D. Kelly stated his opinion that the style of the Vulgate of Acts is against Jerome's authorship. Kelly also asserted categorically that 'the only tenable conclusion is that Jerome, for whatever reason, abandoned the idea of revising the rest of the New Testament (if indeed he ever entertained it at all) once he had completed the Gospels' (1975: 88).

Before he left Rome in 385, after having revised the text of the Gospels, Jerome revised the Latin text of the Psalter according to the Septuagint. He says he revised this book very quickly, but made

substantial changes. This revision used to be identified as the 'Roman Psalter', but recent work has indicated that while the Roman Psalter is not the version that Jerome made at Rome in 384, it may well represent the text on which he worked and which he corrected. A few years later (*c.* 387–8), Jerome made another translation of the Psalms, this time using Origen's Hexaplaric Septuagint text as his basis. This version is known as the 'Gallican Psalter', as it was first accepted for use in the churches of Gaul. It also remained in greater use than his later translation of the Psalms from Hebrew, and so became included in the official Vulgate edition of the Bible, ratified by the Council of Trent. In this 'Gallican Psalter', Jerome included Origen's diacritical signs, which were intended to show where the Septuagint text differed from the Hebrew original. In the same period, Jerome also translated the books of Job, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs. The Psalter, Job (in two manuscripts) and (in only one manuscript) Song of Songs, are all that remain of this translation of parts of the Old Testament from Origen's critical Hexaplaric Septuagint text. The other books are not now extant. In 416, when Augustine asked to consult Jerome's revised Septuagint, the latter had to inform the African bishop that due to someone's deceit, he no longer had a copy of the other books.

By 390, Jerome had become convinced of the necessity to make a fresh translation of the Old Testament from the Hebrew text, and, encouraged by friends and the desire to demolish the arguments of the Jews, he began to translate each of the books of the Hebrew canon, a task which was not completed until 406. It is probable that Jerome began this new translation with the books of Samuel and Kings. After explaining that the Hebrew canon has three divisions, Law, Prophets and 'Hagiographa', Jerome goes on to say:

> This preface to the scriptures may serve as a 'helmeted' introduction to all the books which I translate from Hebrew into Latin . . . Read first, then, my Samuel and Kings; mine, I say, mine. For whatever by careful translation and cautious correction I have learnt and comprehended, is my very own. And when you understand anything of which you were ignorant before, either (if you are grateful) consider me a translator, or (if ungrateful) a paraphraser, although I am not at all conscious of having deviated from the Hebrew original.
>
> *(*Preface to Samuel and Kings*)*

It sounds as if Jerome is writing this preface as a general introduction to his whole translation of the Old Testament, discussing the contents and limits of the Old Testament canon. He refers to the preface as 'helmeted' (*galeatus*) because he arms himself in advance to defend himself from the critics he knows will rise up against him.

Soon after he had finished the translation of Samuel and Kings, Jerome started on Job, the Psalter and the Prophets. His friend Sophronius made an 'elegant Greek translation' of Jerome's renderings of Job and the Psalter, and in *Epistle* 49, composed in 393–4, Jerome informs Pammachius that he has translated the 16 prophets (thus including Daniel) and Job, of which he will be able to borrow a copy from his cousin Marcella. Of this book, Jerome says: 'Read it both in Greek and Latin, and compare the old version with my rendering. You will then see clearly that the difference between them is that between truth and falsehood'. He also tells Pammachius that he has translated Samuel and Kings. The omission of Psalms must have been an oversight on Jerome's part. Ezra, Nahum and Chronicles were translated in 394–5.

It was not until late 404 and early 405 that Jerome translated any more of the Hebrew Old Testament. He gives no reason for the long delay in completing the project, but it is very probably due to his involvement in the Origenist controversy from 393 to 402–3, and also to the fact that he wrote several commentaries in this period. He first translated the Pentateuch, having been asked to by his friend Desiderius. His preface makes it clear that he thinks there is still a good deal to be done before his translation of the Old Testament would be complete.

Next, he translated Joshua, Judges and Ruth, in early 405. In the preface, he expresses his relief at having finished the Pentateuch, 'I feel like a man released from a crippling load of debt'. The rest of the Old Testament books were completed by early 406, thus bringing to an end a labour of some 14 years.

Implications for the canon

One of the major results of Jerome's translations of biblical books was the resolution (to his own satisfaction) of the question of the canon of scripture. In Jerome's early works, he often quotes from the 'apocryphal' books; that is, books which were included in the Septuagint version. The Greek Septuagint had been the accepted Christian version of the Old Testament since the second century, and it had taken on the mantle of divine inspiration. Several different versions of the Greek Old Testament existed in Jerome's day, and this diversity was one of the main reasons that he undertook the long task of translating the biblical books from the original languages. His most balanced statement on the relation between his translation from Hebrew and the older versions is seen in the *Preface to Samuel and the Kings*:

> I beg you, brother, not to think that my work is in any way meant to debase the old translators. Each one offers what he can to the service of the tabernacle of God; some gold and silver and precious stones, others linen and blue and purple and scarlet; we shall do well if we offer skins and goats' hair.

There are several lists of canonical books in Jerome's writings. One such is found in *Epistle* 53.8, where Jerome includes all the books in the Hebrew bible, but the order in which they are recorded is influenced by the Septuagint canon in two ways. First, the Minor Prophets are placed before the other prophetic books, and second, Daniel is placed at the end of the Prophets, ostensibly as one of them. This is a good example of the ambivalent attitude Jerome showed towards the canon. The serious scholar is influenced by the Hebrew canon, while the churchman cannot stray too far from the revered tradition of the Septuagint canon (Brown 1993: 62–71).

As regards the New Testament canon, Jerome's views are relatively straightforward. He affirms the books that are now in the New Testament canon, with the possible exception of 2 and 3 John, concerning which he expresses some doubt about whether they were composed by John the Apostle or John the Presbyter. However, he includes both in the canon (*De viris illustribus* 9). He did much to stabilize the opinion of the western church concerning the position of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Book of Revelation. He recognized that various sections of the church rejected these books because of doubt concerning their apostolic authorship, but says:

> The epistle called 'to the Hebrews' is received not only by the church in the east, but also all church writers of the Greek language before our own time, as being written by Paul the Apostle, though many think that it is by Barnabas or Clement. And it makes no difference whose it is, since it is from a churchman, and is celebrated in the daily readings of the churches. And if the usage of the Latins does not receive it among the canonical scriptures, neither do the Greek churches receive the Revelations of John. And yet we receive both, because we do not follow today's habit, but the authority of ancient writers, who for the most part quote each of them . . . as canonical and churchly.

Other translation work

Jerome did not restrict his translation activities solely to scripture. He is also responsible for translating into Latin a considerable number of Greek theological works (Brown 1993: 91–6; Kelly 1975: 73–7).

The first of these translations was made in 380, when he rendered Eusebius of Caesarea's *Chronicle* into Latin. Having spent several years studying the works of Greek theologians, Jerome was apparently anxious that the Latin-speaking world should have the opportunity of benefiting from their scholarship. Interestingly enough, Jerome was not content with this particular work simply to translate it; he omitted sections he thought unnecessary and added a new section, bringing the *Chronicle* up to date and thereby providing the western world with a history of the world from Abraham to 379.

Jerome then turned to translating into Latin the works of Origen, from whose exegetical writings he had learned so much. Jerome was interested in translating most, if not all, of Origen's works, but was prevented from doing so by a painful eye irritation caused by constant reading, and by a lack of money to employ copyists. Jerome did succeed, however, in translating quite a number of Origen's homilies. He also translated a work of Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit*, from Greek to Latin. This work, along with some of Origen's homilies, is now lost in Greek, and Jerome's translation is the only way we can know these important works today.

Biblical commentaries

By far the major part of Jerome's literary output is in commentary form. He states that the purpose of a commentary is 'to discuss what is obscure, to touch on the obvious, to dwell at length on what is doubtful' (*Commentary on Galatians 4.6*). Scripture, for Jerome, was full of obscurities and a reliable guide was needed. A commentary ought to 'repeat the opinions of the many . . . so that the judicious reader, when he has perused the different explanations . . . May judge which is the best and, like a good banker, reject the money from a spurious mint' (*Apology against Rufinus 1.16*).

In most of his commentaries, Jerome acknowledges the previous authors from whom he borrowed, and they are valuable because they transmit a great wealth of comments from other scholars, some of which would otherwise have been lost. Jerome wrote commentaries on almost all the books of the Old Testament, and on some of the New Testament. One of Jerome's earliest works was the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*, which was more a grammatical and etymological study of some passages in Genesis. He paid special attention to the (supposed) meaning and etymology of the Hebrew words, and intended it to be the first of a series of such volumes. He dropped the project, however, when he began his translation of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. The work dates from about 390 (Hayward 1995: 23–7). A little earlier, in 386–7, Jerome wrote his *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, dedicated to the young widow Blesilla, whom Jerome had taught in Rome. He used Origen as his main source, but the short work shows some traces of originality. It is based on the Hebrew text.

During the period 391 and 406, Jerome wrote commentaries on all the Minor Prophets. Most notable among these is the *Commentary on Jonah*. It is interesting because it follows earlier Christian exegesis of this story in seeing in Jonah a prefigurement of Christ and his resurrection. He translated it first from Hebrew and then from the Greek text, and gave a double exegesis, first literal then spiritual. Jerome treated the story as genuinely historical and argued strongly that Jonah really did spend three days in the belly of the whale. On the spiritual level, he argued for Jonah as a 'type' of Christ, and interpreted many of the details of the story in this light. Thus Jonah's flight from the Lord's face points to the Son's descent from the heavenly realm, and his preaching to Nineveh points to Christ's post-resurrection command to preach to the nations (Duval 1977).

The *Commentary on Daniel*, composed in 407, is a study of selected passages from Daniel, based on Jerome's own translation from the Hebrew. This is one of Jerome's most interesting commentaries, for he spends most of the book criticizing the anti-Christian polemic of the third-century Neo-platonist philosopher, Porphyry. The latter had argued (correctly) that Daniel was not a prophecy dating from the sixth century BCE, but rather a tract for the times, written to encourage Jews who were suffering persecution at the hands of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 167–164 BCE. Jerome, on the other hand, rejected this interpretation and argued that the revelation of Christ was

to be found throughout the book. So, for instance, he suggests that 'the stone . . . cut from the mountain by no human hand' (Dan 2:45), was none other than the Saviour who was conceived without human intercourse.

Jerome's most extensive commentary was on Isaiah, finished in 410, and consisting of 18 books, each with its own preface. Jerome laboured under the false impression that Isaiah was the work of one man, but followed his normal practice of alternating literal and spiritual exegesis, although he reproduced the Greek version only where it differed significantly from the Hebrew, in order to avoid excessive length (Jay 1985).

Jerome's final commentary on the Old Testament was his unfinished work on Jeremiah. This was begun in 414 or 415, and was interrupted by Jerome's involvement in the Pelagian controversy. The commentary covers only 32 of Jeremiah's 52 chapters, but contains several interesting features. There is an increasing emphasis on the Hebrew text, and he argues that the Septuagint text was unreliable as it had been corrupted by copyists (*Commentary on Jeremiah 17:1–4*). Also interesting is the fact that Jerome criticizes his former hero, Origen, very severely. This is probably because of the Pelagians (who considered themselves to be disciples of Origen), against whose beliefs Jerome wrote a treatise (*Dialogue against the Pelagians*). A third point of interest in this commentary is that Jerome concentrates on the straightforward literal interpretation of the text, rather than on allegorical exegesis. This may be partly because of the nature of Jeremiah's text and partly because Jerome was writing for his friend Eusebius of Cremona, who preferred the literal sense (Kelly 1975: 316).

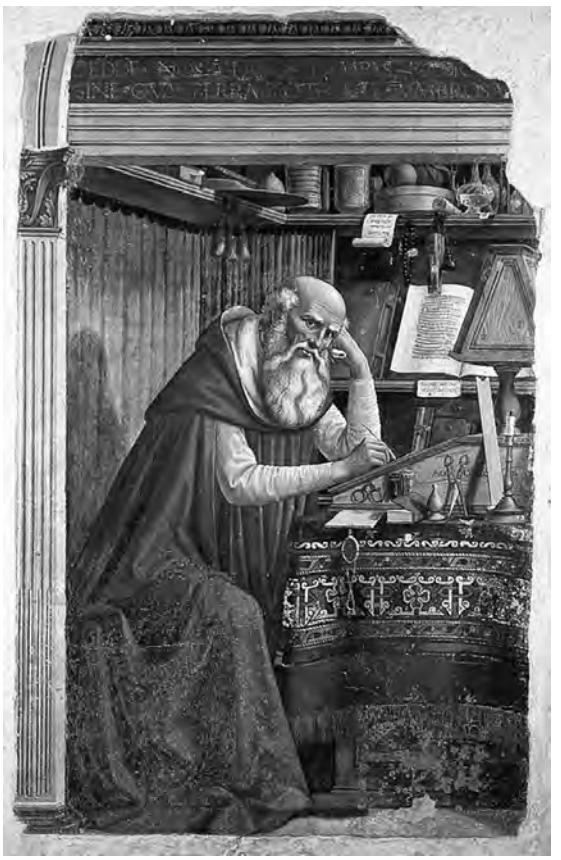

Figure 56.2 *St. Jerome in His Study*, Domenico Ghirlandaio, 1480, Church of Ognissanti, Florence. Wikicommons

Jerome the controversialist

Jerome was involved in several theological controversies. Some of these were relatively good-natured. His younger contemporary, Augustine, initiated a correspondence between the two. Augustine criticized Jerome for taking the position (in *Commentary on Galatians* 2:11) that when Paul chastised Peter at Antioch over eating food with Gentile converts, there was really no difference of opinion between the two apostles. Augustine argued that Jerome's interpretation of this passage shows Paul's rebuke of Peter to have been deliberately simulated. According to Augustine, this meant that a passage of scripture contained a falsehood, and this meant that the truth of the whole Bible was put in jeopardy. The vagaries of the postal system meant that Jerome did not receive Augustine's criticisms until years later (see Kelly 1975: 265–7). When he did finally reply, Jerome essentially ignored Augustine's criticism, but made a veiled warning that if the younger man persisted in criticizing his exegesis, he could expect much harsher treatment in the future.

Jerome's other 'controversial' writings were more bitter. These polemical works do not reveal Jerome as a deeply speculative or innovative thinker, but rather as a vigorous and vitriolic defender of the Faith and of his own reputation. The most important theologically was his involvement in the 'Origenist' controversy. Jerome had been an admirer of Origen, but, when the dispute between Epiphanius, the fanatical bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, and Bishop John of Jerusalem broke, Jerome sided with the former, while Jerome's old friend Rufinus took the side of the latter. Jerome was more concerned about justifying his own reputation as an orthodox thinker rather than with the question of Origen's orthodoxy. Jerome wrote:

> I revered him [Origen] as an exegete, not as theologian – for his genius not his faith, as a philosopher rather than an apostle; believe me I have never been an Origenist.

Early in 397, Jerome wrote a ferocious attack on Bishop John of Jerusalem (*Against John of Jerusalem*) in which he demolished John's arguments in favour of Origen, and heaped numerous insults on John personally. Jerome found the bishop's beliefs dangerously ambiguous, avoiding the real issues in the dispute, and riddled with heresy. On the crucial issue of the state of the body of Christ and of Christians after the resurrection, Jerome was at pains to show, in an extended analytical passage, that John's teaching was hopelessly inadequate; he had always spoken of the resurrection of the body, never of the resurrection of the flesh (*Against John of Jerusalem 23–6*). Jerome ridiculed John on a personal level, labelling him as grovelling, arrogant and insufferably proud.

Jerome and John of Jerusalem were finally reconciled later in 397 in the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem. He was never to be reconciled with his erstwhile friend, Rufinus, however. In 398, Rufinus translated Origen's *On First Principle*s, and composed *The Falsification of the Works of Origen*, in which he propounded the thesis that Origen's writings had been interpolated wholesale by heretics, and that this accounted for all the unorthodox passages. Jerome was incensed both by the translation then by Rufinus' support for Origen. He immediately produced his own literal translation of *On First Principles* and wrote a scathing letter (*Epistle 84*) in which he set out his own attitude to Origen, playing down his early enthusiasm and appealing to some of his own commentaries to justify his acceptance of some of Origen's judgements and interpretations, but not his doctrines. Rufinus argued that if Jerome was denouncing Origen, he was really denouncing himself.

Jerome's reply came immediately and was full of indignant rage. This two-part invective first justified Jerome's own actions, and then launched into a violent castigation of Rufinus. In the following year, Jerome added a third part to this tirade against Rufinus. This has been described as 'quite extreme in its violence' (Murphy 1952: 153) It added little to what he had already written in the *Apology against Rufinus*, reinforcing the charges of heresy, falsehood and provocative translations. It is a bitter, malicious and spiteful attack on Rufinus' person. Rufinus do not reply to this work, but Jerome continue to direct abuses at him even after Rufinus' death. What Jerome's part in the

Origenist controversy shows is the depths to which he was prepared to sink in order to uphold what he believed to be orthodox Christian beliefs as well as his own reputation as a biblical scholar and orthodox believer.

Jerome the person and his legacy

Jerome was prodigiously hard-working, often studying or writing into the early hours, labouring, even when ill, to finish letters or larger works. He composed the *Commentary on Matthew* in just two weeks, for instance, so that his friend Eusebius of Cremona would have something to read on an imminent sea voyage. He had to work at astonishing speed to get this finished on time, and it should be no surprise that he made historical errors, and that some parts of the gospel are given very cursory treatment. In many ways, Jerome was not a perfectionist; he did not work and re-work material until it was perfect. Rather, he responded to the immediate needs of his friends, who often asked for advice or help of one sort or another.

Jerome could be, as with Eusebius of Cremona, extremely generous, both with his time and talents. He could also be extremely vicious in his attacks on former friends or teachers. Rufinus, as we have seen, had been a very close friend in Jerome's youth, but Jerome turned against him viciously after the Origenist controversy. Jerome's malicious temperament is also seen during the Origenist controversy in the open hostility he shows towards Origen, the man he formally called 'the greatest teacher of the church after the apostles' (Preface to the *Book of the Interpretations of Hebrew Names*). Jerome summarizes the heretical views put forward in *On First Principles*, but often distorts Origen's opinions. He unjustly accuses Origen of having denied the Incarnation, misrepresents Origen's views on the salvation of the Devil, the transmigration of souls and the resurrection (*Epistle* 124.2, 4, 8, 11).

As a scholar, Jerome was essentially eclectic. He searched diligently in the works of others and drew the best points from each, while avoiding their errors. This holds true also of the different 'schools' of interpretation accessible to Jerome – Alexandrian, Antiochene and Jewish.

From the Antiochene school, Jerome learned that an interpreter of the Bible must first study and explain the literal, plain sense and only after this has been accomplished should he venture beyond this to the deeper, spiritual interpretation. From the Alexandrian school, especially from Origen, Jerome borrowed many specific allegorical interpretations. Jerome cites Alexandrian authors much more frequently than he does Antiochenes, but the reason for this is not necessarily that he was more in tune with the former, but rather that the works of Alexandrian exegetes were more readily available to him, and also that the Antiochene school was still in its youth when Jerome was writing and had produced a relatively small collection of commentaries from which he could borrow. From Jewish exegesis, Jerome learned the primary importance of the original text of the Old Testament, so that he was unique among the early Church Fathers in his use of the Hebrew text as the basis of his exegesis of the Old Testament.

Even during his lifetime, Jerome was held by many to be a great authority on the interpretation of the Bible. Jerome's contemporary Sulpicius Severus wrote in 405:

> I would be surprised if he (Jerome) were not already known to you through his writings since he is read throughout the world.
>
> *(Dialogues 1.8)*

In the centuries following Jerome's death, he was universally acknowledged as the prince of Christian biblical scholars, and his works became a fertile ground for the labours of subsequent exegetes. The reasons for this fame were twofold. First, Jerome's translation of the Bible became accepted everywhere as the standard biblical text in the western church; second, Jerome's immense and intimate knowledge and understanding of the Bible surpassed that of any other Christian scholar for centuries.

Although Jerome wrote commentaries on several of the Pauline letters and on Matthew's gospel, it is for his Old Testament commentaries that he is chiefly remembered. He is the only ancient author who commented on all the books of the Major and Minor Prophets. Jerome saw it as his special task to explain these Old Testament books, because they were more difficult to understand than the books of the New Testament. Jerome's enormous erudition is exhibited on every page of his writings. He quotes frequently from classical authors, as well as from the Bible and other Christian writers. In addition, Jerome, with his highly developed powers of observation, makes many suggestive and original contributions to the understanding of the biblical text.

The writings of Jerome are of lasting value to Christians today because they offer a splendid example of the state of biblical interpretation in the west in the fourth century, because they give us an interesting insight into relations between Christians and Jews in the generations after Christianity became the religion of the state, and also because they paint for us, in vivid colours, a picture of the 'irascible monk' who devoted his life to a study of the sacred scriptures – in his own words:

> What other life can there be without the knowledge of the scriptures, for through these Christ himself, who is the life of the faithful, becomes known.
>
> *(Epistle 30.7)*

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57
AMBROSE

Ivor J. Davidson

Books profiling the leading figures of the early church tend to commit one of three crimes against Ambrose, bishop of Milan from 374 to 397. Very often they trivialize him, reducing his significance to that of supporting actor to the real protagonist of the later West, Augustine, whose creative genius and theological influence more or less totally eclipse the gifts of the one under whose spell he took his decisive steps towards Christianity in the first place. At best, Ambrose merits a bland paragraph or two outlining his impact upon Augustine, with a few predictable phrases explaining that he was in any case first and foremost a 'man of action', which (however true) is apparently intended to suggest that his intellectual abilities were slight. In other surveys, conversely, Ambrose is idolized, depicted as the stained-glass saint, other-worldly to the core, staunch champion of truth against error and sponsor of the rights of the church against every hubristic claim from secular authority. Icon of holiness and fearless defender of the faith, he appears to have scarcely a shortcoming at all. Third, worst of all, and remarkably often, Ambrose has been ignored altogether. The assumption apparently is that, *doctor* of the church or no, he holds little interest for those concerned to trace the big picture of Christianity's development. In far too many undergraduate church history syllabuses, and in the textbooks which they spawn, Ambrose scarcely merits a mention.

Each of these treatments is, wittingly or unwittingly, an injustice to an individual whose role in the formation of Christianity in the West was in fact both remarkable and complex. Ambrose deserves far better. Thankfully, there are signs that he is starting to receive it. Recent years have witnessed the publication of a number of sophisticated studies which seek to explore the man in his own context and to assess his achievements in the light of the advances that have occurred in our understanding of his social and political world (McLynn 1994; Williams 1995; Ramsey 1997; Savon 1997; Moorhead 1999; Liebeschuetz 2011: pt. II). It is increasingly acknowledged that (a) Ambrose does merit a serious place in the history books, and (b) he can only be accessed by reading between the narrow lines of a hagiography which has deftly but dangerously abstracted him from the realities of his time. We now know that his successes were far harder won than a good deal of earlier scholarship (e.g. De Labriolle 1928; Von Campenhausen 1929; Palanque 1933; Homes Dudden 1935; Paredi 1964a) could or would perceive; that Ambrose struggled against considerable opposition for much of his episcopal career, and often survived not just by dint of an unbending spiritual fidelity but also because of his ability to improvise in tight corners. Sanctity of character and steadfastness of doctrine are undoubtedly relevant categories in any summary of Ambrose's qualities; the shrewdness of the political operator, the theatricality of the skilled public orator, and the evocative powers of the image-maker were also among his gifts.

Figure 57.1 Late antique mosaic of St. Ambrose in the church St. Ambrogio in Milan, possibly an actual portrait, made while Ambrose was living. Photo Wikimedia Commons

In the attempt to escape both patronizing dismissal and uncritical veneration, however, it is easy to fall prey to yet another danger. If we are not careful, we can create the impression that Ambrose's significance was little more than political, and that his political success in itself should be interpreted with a strong dose of cynicism (cf. Ramsey 1997: ix). The quest for the historical Ambrose, the attempt to strip away the accretions of a reverential portraiture which left the real man buried beneath the weight of his own glory, can equally readily fashion an individual after its own image: reconstructions of Ambrose the saint can, with little difficulty, be replaced by reconstructions of Ambrose the Machiavellian. No sketch of an historical figure can in the end be anything other than a fictive attempt to capture its subject's personality, but the sensitive historian must try to steer between the equal and opposite extremes of seeing Ambrose only as an idol to be venerated or as a political phantom whose inner personality is obscure to the point of unreality.

Mindful of the pitfalls, we shall seek to explore Ambrose in a three-pronged approach. First, we shall look at his context, the kind of influences and perspectives which formed him, and the circumstances of his elevation to the episcopate. Second, we shall consider his quest to find his own role as a Christian leader, as one catapulted out of a civil career, with little or no spiritual or theological preparation, and charged with stabilizing an ecclesiastical situation fraught with factional tensions. This must

involve an examination of developments which belong in the political realm, for although Ambrose was much more than a politician it was through his participation in many of the public events of his time that he carved out his distinctive niche as a churchman. Even in an age when politics and theology were exceptionally intertwined, he exercised an unparalleled influence upon political affairs. Finally, we shall try to evaluate the larger-scale results of that quest for self-definition as seen in the ecclesial community which Ambrose laboured to construct, both in Milan and further afield.

Scholarship has in recent years come to appreciate in much more nuanced fashion the intellectual contours of Ambrose's activity as biblical interpreter, preacher, liturgist and pastor, recognizing the complex ways in which his moral teaching and practice reflect his efforts to demonstrate the transformative power of divine grace. Ambrose saw Christian baptism as the gateway to human existence as it was divinely intended to be (Satterlee 2002), and his ends were thoroughly practical. He sought a reconfiguration of late Roman attitudes to gender, sexuality, freedom, wealth, poverty, power, leadership and service in light of a Christian narrative of salvation (Brown 2012: 120–47). Specific, embodied social situations were in view, not abstract ideas (Colish 2005); in addressing these circumstances as he did, through the lens of scripture and creed, he set forth a comprehensively imaginative vision of human fulfilment and change. Much more than some have thought, Ambrose was indeed a creative moral thinker, and while his ideas of course continued to be heavily shaped by his classical inheritance, they also deserve to be appraised as theological at their core, not as some pastiche of jostling philosophical influences or an exercise only in pragmatism (Smith 2011). Ambrose's representations of virtue will not necessarily be regarded by late moderns as emancipatory in any straightforward sense (e.g. Burrus 2000: 134–83), and in his own time his audiences were hardly always changed as profoundly as he wished (cf. generally Salzman 2002). But his rhetorical and symbolic methods were not less than creative, neither were they less than theological. Taken together, they may be seen as a vital instrument in the expansion of his account of the Christian message in his cultural world. In the end, Ambrose's spiritual as well as his practical legacy may be gauged in the particular character that he created for the public face of the Nicene faith on the stage of the Western empire. He was scarcely the only artist of that image, but he was one of the most important.

Context, formation and election

Ambrose' early life

Aurelius Ambrosius did not come from the top drawer of senatorial society, but he did hail from a privileged background. He was born at Trier, probably early in 339 (Palanque 1933: 480–2, 542–3), while his father served at the court of Constantine II, almost certainly as praetorian prefect of the Gauls, a high-level role which carried administrative responsibility for a vast area of Western Europe (Fischer 1984; Mazzarino 1989: 75–82). Ambrose senior died young, leaving his widow with three children: a girl, Marcellina, and two boys, Uranius Satyrus, and Ambrose junior. The family moved to Rome (probably returning to a property they already held), and the metropolis became their adopted home. His late father's office did not afford him an automatic entrée into patrician society; he and his brother had to earn their place among an aristocratic set by cultivating the appropriate social *mores*. They passed through an education in 'the liberal arts', receiving the standard training in classical literature, rhetoric and law which equipped young men for a career in the imperial civil service. Ambrose's schooling in the *quadriga* of Cicero, Vergil, Terence and Sallust remained with him for the rest of his days, profoundly influencing the style and texture of his speech and writing.

Their household established itself firmly in Roman Christian society. Marcellina took vows of chastity and received the veil from Pope Liberius in the new basilica of St. Peter's, probably on the festival of Epiphany in 353. Marcellina adopted a life of domestic piety, residing in semi-seclusion with her family and a virginal companion, occupied in the kind of spiritual activities described so memorably by Jerome in his sketches of Lea, Paula and Marcella (*Epistles* 23, 108, 127) and above

all in his famous *Epistle* 22 to Eustochium. Ambrose spent his youth in a household in which visits from clergymen were a regular event, and where talk of ecclesiastical affairs (such as news from the Council of Milan in 355) was part of regular conversation. Like plenty of other scions of Christian households, however, he and Satyrus remained unbaptized in childhood.

On completing their education, the brothers became advocates at the court of the praetorian prefect of Italy, Volcacius Rufinus, at Sirmium on the Danube. This choice of career path would not have been the fastest track to promotion for full-blooded aristocrats, who could count on their connections to open doors for them more directly, but it was a promising appointment for young men whose natural place was on the margins rather than at the core of the senatorial élite. As it turned out, both distinguished themselves as orators, and recognition was not long in coming. The fabulously wealthy Sextus Anicius Petronius Probus was appointed as Rufinus' successor in 368. Like many men of his type, Probus was a largely nominal Christian, but he had (particularly through his wife) significant connections with the church at Rome, and for the Ambrosii the associations were fortuitous. Ambrose soon became an assessor in Probus' *consiliarium*; then, in *c.* 372/3, he was raised to the rank of *consularis* and made governor of Aemilia-Liguria (Satyrus evidently received parallel favours, though the location of his governorship is unknown). This was a prestigious post which carried the title of *clarissimus* and brought jurisdiction – a responsibility for enforcing law and order, administering justice and collecting taxes – over a considerable tract of north-west Italy. His headquarters were in Milan, which had steadily emerged as the principal urban centre in the Western empire, now more important in political terms than the mother-city, Rome.

The see of Milan had been occupied since 355 by Auxentius, a homoian 'Arian', or subscriber to the position that Christ the Son was not, as the Council of Nicaea had said, 'of the same substance' (*homoousios*) with God the Father, but 'like' (*homoios*) him (Hanson 1988: 557–97; on Western as well as Eastern homoianism, see Ayres 2004: 133–86). A Cappadocian by birth, Auxentius had been appointed following the deposition of a pro-Nicene bishop, Dionysius, and he had survived more than one attempt from Nicene dissidents to remove him from office, including some serious broadsides from combatants as able as Hilary of Poitiers and Eusebius of Vercelli (Williams 1995: 38–68). He was a popular preacher, well-read in contemporary Greek theology, and a skilful player of church politics. He presided in an immense basilica, seating up to 3,000, the magnificence of which could hardly have failed to impress his parishioners.

Most importantly of all, Auxentius enjoyed the support of Valentinian I (emperor 364–75). A devout Christian, Valentinian aspired to religious neutrality, but while he resided in Milan in 364–5 he had issued an edict calling upon the city to rally behind the man who was after all its official bishop, and he had Hilary banished for protesting that Auxentius' heretical views debarred him from such support. The homoians constituted a clear majority within the Milanese church; the Nicenes could only observe and disapprove of Auxentius' hegemony from without, maintaining a separatist identity by meeting in private houses or by congregating at outdoor conventicles, typically held around the cemetery areas outside the city where their forebears of similar doctrinal sympathies were buried.

The appointment of Ambrose as bishop of Milan

In the autumn of 374 Auxentius died, and the city was thrown into turmoil. The pro-Nicenes demanded a say in the appointment of a successor, and infiltrated an official gathering of homoian clergy and people in Auxentius' basilica to press their case. There is no evidence that the dispute had turned violent, but Ambrose chose to intervene, arriving at the cathedral in person to deliver a stern official's speech on the necessity of keeping the peace. On the face of things, his motives were formal and juridical, an attempt to defuse a dangerous situation and forestall public disorder. In reality, he was seen to be endorsing the legitimacy of the Nicenes' effort to disrupt an official ceremony being held for the purposes of acclaiming a new, and inevitably homoian, candidate. As a son of the Roman

church, and by now a catechumen, Ambrose's sympathies undoubtedly lay with the Nicene camp, but he could hardly have anticipated the outcome of his actions. According to Paulinus, his secretary-biographer, all of a sudden, in the midst of the uproar a child's voice was heard to cry, *Ambrosius episcopus*!, 'Ambrose for bishop!'. At this sound, the story goes, the whole mood of the gathering changed: Arians and catholics forgot their differences and united in a plea for their *consularis*, truly a wild-card candidate, to become bishop himself (Paulinus, *Vita Ambrosii* 6).

But Ambrose, by his actions seeking to distance himself from the unexpected outcome of the meeting (Paulinus, *Vita Ambros*. 6–9; Rufinus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2.11; Duval 1976), immediately left the church and resumed his administrative duties, deliberately ignoring the clamour for his election. He returned to his tribunal and, contrary to his usual practice (or so it is said – implausibly), passed a sentence of public torture on a number of people, in a bid to compromise his image as a just and humane adjudicator. His supporters, however, having followed him from the basilica, cried out that as far as they were concerned, his sin could fall upon their heads; it made no difference to their wish that he be bishop. Ambrose had now received public acclamation to bolster the attestation already afforded him at the church gathering.

Retreating to his own home, he resorted to some more desperate expedients, this time entering into direct negotiation with his crowd of pursuers. First, he professed that he wished to devote himself to the life of a philosopher. Judging by the later evidence of his reading in philosophical texts, this may have been a genuine plea, but it too failed. Next he tried once more to disqualify himself morally by inviting prostitutes under his roof, but this elicited the same response as his previous attempt to compromise himself: 'Your sin be upon us'. Finally, he resolved to flee Milan. He left the city by night, destined for Pavia, but was discovered the next morning at the Porta Romana, the main triumphal route into Milan. From there he was escorted back into the city. It is improbable that the governor did not know which road to take; Ambrose appears to have deliberately staged the spectacle of a triumphal return, simultaneously frustrated in his attempt to escape yet buoyed up by a clear display of public support. Nevertheless, he still resisted ordination. An appeal was sent to Valentinian, but the accompanying report of Ambrose's attempts to escape was probably intercepted by the prefect Petronius Probus himself, who, as Ambrose's patron, had his own interests in engineering the right outcome. By the time the plea reached the emperor, it doubtless seemed a clear-cut case of sanctioning a candidate for whom there was unanimous popular approval. There is nothing to support the once-standard idea that Ambrose's election was an example of ordination purely by public acclamation (Gryson 1980: 269–73), but it is easy to imagine Valentinian's readiness to rubber-stamp the appointment of an able administrator whose candidacy was presented to him, however tendentiously, as a potential cure for Milan's doctrinal divisions. Meantime, Ambrose sought to flee once more, going into hiding at the estate of Leontius, one of his aristocratic friends. His aim was probably to ensure that if he were to be appointed bishop, it would be with the express endorsement of the emperor and not simply as the partisan choice of the pro-Nicenes. On the arrival of the appropriate response from Valentinian, the *vicarius*, Probus' deputy in Milan and Ambrose's immediate superior, issued an edict threatening severe punishment for anyone found harbouring the fugitive governor, and Leontius wasted no time in handing him over. In the end, we are told, Ambrose gave in, realizing that he could no longer resist the destiny that providence had in store for him (Paulinus, *Vita Ambros*. 9).

To modern eyes, the whole process appears bizarre. Ambrose had no theological training for a clerical role and had not even been baptized. There is little reason to doubt his reluctance to accept the future being thrust upon him. It was common in the late Roman world for those elected to high public office formally to decline preferment, pleading unworthiness and inability, and the same convention became widespread in church life. Ambrose's refusal, though, must have been genuine enough. A talented young administrator with influential connections, security of tenure and healthy prospects, he had little reason to desire the invidious task of holding together a community riven by conflicting tribal loyalties. However devout his background in Rome, he must scarcely have considered it likely that this could be his calling.

Nevertheless, his flair for stage-managing events was obvious in his handling of the circumstances in which he found himself. The episodes narrated by Paulinus are not hagiographical embellishments, designed merely to bolster an image of Ambrose's self-effacement. Rather, they reveal the earliest indications that the new bishop had a keen sense of the importance of public gestures (McLynn 1994: 44–52). Ambrose had been faced with a situation which must have surprised him and a prospect which he quickly realized he could not in the end escape. He turned it into a series of steps which ensured that he established his inherently shaky credentials on the best footing possible. First, he insisted upon receiving baptism only at the hands of a Catholic bishop. This was a clear gesture to the Nicenes, for whom baptism by any other brand of cleric would have been invalid. At the same time, he made sure that he was seen to identify with a clerical body that was firmly homoian. After baptism, he was ceremonially passed through each of the clerical grades, from doorkeeper to presbyter, in the course of a week, before being consecrated the following Sunday, 7 December (for a defence of the traditional date, see Faller 1942). This strategy was not a formal satisfaction of the canonical rule that a novice ought not to be elevated to the episcopate overnight (*pace* Gryson 1968: 225 n. 18; Williams 1995: 114–15 n. 48), neither is the account of it an apologetic fabrication by Paulinus (*pace* Fischer 1970; cf. Ramsey 1997: 20–1); rather, it provided a deliberate build-up to the finale of Ambrose's consecration. It successively associated him with each of the ranks in his church, and pre-empted a lengthy examination of his qualifications prior to the formal nomination ceremony on 7 December (McLynn 1994: 51).

As part of the final display, he publicly handed over his gold and silver to the church and to the poor (Paulinus, *Vita Ambros*. 38). This was no naïve relinquishing of all his wealth, for the family estates, centred particularly in Africa (plus, it seems, some lands in Sicily), remained in his control, and his sister's needs at Rome were well provided for by the donation of a regular income from the property. It was designed, rather, to signal his new role as civic benefactor and patron of those in need. What must have happened in reality was that a proportion of the family assets was invested in Milan in order to help finance Ambrose's future strategy for managing his diocese.

Ambrose' qualifications and preparation for the episcopacy

Ambrose brought to the episcopate a specific complex of social, intellectual and practical perspectives. Thanks to natural talent, hard work and some assiduous networking, he had managed by his early thirties to attain high office in an imperial system which could well have passed over men of his background in favour of those whose *Romanitas* was of more venerable standing.

He had been shaped by the kinds of opinions, pretensions and prejudices typical of those who had worked their way to a position of influence and power rather than enjoying it by birthright. He remained profoundly affected by a concern for what 'men of the first rank' would think, for the sort of standards of public behaviour deemed appropriate for gentlemen, and the need to preserve a proper assurance and *gravitas* in social interaction; all these are expected features in a culture where honour was a central value (see Chapter 1 of this volume). Though he would make much of biblical patterns of altruism, traditional aristocratic assumptions about ethnic identity, class and social dignity would also stay not far beneath the surface of his moralizing.

Ambrose's mind remained steeped in the literature and mythology of the classical world. Acutely conscious of his lack of preparation for his new role and the sudden obligation that it brought to teach and learn at the same time (*De officiis* 1.1–4; *De virginibus* 1.1–4; 2.1–5), he had to apply his gifts to a whole new field. His greatest asset was that he had been trained to read Greek fluently. The skill proved invaluable as he began to educate himself in the complexities of contemporary Christological discourse and the conventions of how to exegete biblical texts. He set himself a rigorous programme of reading in Philo, Origen, Basil, Didymus, Athanasius and others, rapidly assimilating the Alexandrians' techniques of allegory and typology, and learning to imitate standard moralizing expositions of biblical exemplars. The theological and hermeneutical influences would be deeply

formative for his preaching. Besides these authorities, he also studied Platonist texts, familiarizing himself with a philosophical literature that enjoyed a certain popularity among Milan's intelligentsia. His sermons would evince vestiges from Apuleius, Porphyry and Plotinus, and his spirituality would be configured around the theme of a spiritual ascent towards wisdom – though conceptualized in significantly new guise, as a journey initiated in the waters of baptism and climaxing in eschatological union with the God of Jesus Christ (Courcelle 1968: 93–138). Ambrose was no unreconstructed philosopher, or naïve synthesizer of Platonist dualism with biblical anthropology; he knew very well that his Christian theology of creation and redemption meant radical differences as well. He read with a great deal more discernment than has sometimes been imagined. Habitually, it seems, he made sure that his study was *visible* to his people: Augustine tells of how the Milanese would watch their bishop as he pored in silence over his books in whatever precious intervals he could snatch from an administrative and pastoral workload which must from the start have been very heavy (*Confessions* 6.3.3).

In addition, Ambrose had proved himself to be an accomplished rhetorician. His abilities in this field had helped to win him early distinction as an advocate at Sirmium. He would learn to harness these gifts to his new knowledge; his powerful and learned pulpit performances soon marked him out as one of the most effective preachers of the patristic age, revered for the eloquent charm of his style (Augustine, *Conf.* 5.13.23). He played no small part in finally persuading Augustine of his gospel, and it was by Ambrose that Augustine would be baptized, in 387 CE (Willis 2012).

Figure 57.2 *The Saint (i.e. Augustine) Baptized by Ambrose*, Painting by Niccolò di Pietro (fl. Venice 1394–1430) in the Vatican. Photo Wikimedia Commons

Ambrose had also acquired invaluable experience as an administrator and adjudicator. In an age when bishops, particularly in metropolitan sees like Milan, had become linchpins in the system of imperial bureaucracy (Rapp 2005), he would require all of his organizational skills and all of his flair for negotiation and bargaining. Ambrose would find himself not only in charge of considerable financial and material assets, and responsible not just for (often fractious) human resources both in his own city and across north Italy; he would become a hearer of civil disputes (the onerous work of the *audientia episcopalis*), a go-between and sponsor of interests and causes at an imperial court, a mediator and ambassador on political business. He always looked back on his life as a provincial governor in negative terms (*De paenitentia* 2.67, 72–3; *Off.* 1.4; cf. *Epistle extra collectionem* 14 [63].65: Lenox-Conyngham 1982a), but without the training and expertise acquired in his former career it is very unlikely he would have become the kind of episcopal leader he proved to be.

Devising an episcopal role

The achievements of preaching, pastoring and leading, however, lay somewhat down the track: first, Ambrose had to work out a basic *modus operandi*. He had inherited a clerical body which remained dominated by homoian officials, and it was not practicable for him to make sweeping changes in his staff. His congregation, too, was predominantly loyal to the memory of Auxentius. As yet he possessed neither the knowledge nor the experience necessary to take on those with whom he disagreed. Prudently, he chose to avoid confrontation and concentrated on building up his profile as bishop of the whole see, rather than playing directly to a pro-Nicene constituency. There is possible evidence that he sought the help of Basil of Caesarea to return to Milan the bones of Auxentius' Nicene predecessor, Dionysius, who had died in exile in Armenia, but it is uncertain whether the information (Basil, *Ep.* 197.2) is authentic: Ambrose may or may not have been able to venture such a gesture. What he did do was show favour to at least one notable former Catholic dissident, the venerable presbyter Simplicianus, who returned from Rome to become his baptismal instructor, and perhaps continued to act as a theological mentor beyond the initiation process (at an advanced age, Simplicianus would one day be nominated by his pupil as his successor in the see).

Ambrose's earliest attentions were devoted to the acquisition of theological knowledge, and he waited more than two years before he published his first written work. When it came, its subject was significant: *De virginibus*. The theme neatly avoided the doctrinal tensions in his church, and gave Ambrose an opportunity to establish a distinctive didactic voice of his own. He speaks as the brother of a consecrated virgin (the work is dedicated to Marcellina), and the son of a pious widow. His family associations with female asceticism are presented as implicitly qualifying him to give instruction on this subject at least, however unprepared he still is for a general teaching role. He draws particularly upon Athanasius and Cyprian, though the debts are barely signalled (Duval 1974). The Italian churches already had plenty of women consecrated to a life of domestic asceticism, but Ambrose preached a new variant on the theme. He called upon the young women of Milan to devote themselves to Christ and his church as a public dedication of their desire to escape the game of being used as financial pawns in marriages arranged by wealthy parents. In a bid to persuade their families to encourage such commitment, he argued that the presence of a consecrated virgin in a household would bring merit to cover the family's sins (*Virg.* 1.32). This kind of strategy provoked some resentment, for the bishop was interfering in the private affairs of the family; but it also won results (Riggi 1980; Brown 1988: 341–65; Savon 1989). Ambrose was able to stage impressive processions of young candidates coming forward in large numbers to receive the veil, some of them from as far afield as North Africa. The spectacle of these parades can only have boosted the fledgling bishop's prestige in the eyes of his public.

Preoccupation with outward form characterized other moves as well. Encountering a cleric who happened to walk in a fashion that displeased him, Ambrose set about dealing with him: the man was summoned before the bishop's tribunal, whereupon he promptly deserted the clergy rather than

face the ire of his superior (*Off.* 1.72). The concern for correctness of gait nicely illustrates Ambrose's concern to ensure standards of public behaviour which would commend the church to the eyes of discerning onlookers; he could not institute a wholesale restaffing schedule, but he could make a few changes indirectly which would improve the appearance of his clerical body by raising its proficiency in the semiotics of classical good conduct. He himself adopted a lifestyle which combined these polite manners with a self-conscious austerity, devoting himself not only to study and prayer but also to frugality of dress and diet, including the observance of regular fasts (Paulinus, *Vita Ambros*. 38 speaks of his body being wasted by 'daily fasts'), all designed to demonstrate his consecration to asceticism (Augustine thought his chastity his one obvious hardship: *Conf.* 6.3.3).

Most strikingly of all in terms of public display, he set about a major church-building programme. In time, it would transform the religious landscape of Milan, as the city's suburbs came to be dominated by a series of towering edifices epitomizing the style of Ambrose's regime. Most of the construction took place in the 380s, but there is evidence that the work had begun as early as the late 370s (*De excessu fratris* 1.20). There are signs, too, that the homoian majority soon came to see the scheme for what it was: an audacious policy of imposing Ambrose's presence, and with it his increasingly open doctrinal alignment, upon the city and its hinterland. Some of the funds for the projects came from the private money which Ambrose had invested in the church, but not all. In order to ransom prisoners of war caught up in the Gothic ravages after the Roman wipe-out at the battle of Adrianople in 378 (Burns 1974), Ambrose opted to melt down and sell church plate to provide extra financial resources (*Off.* 2.70–5, 136–43). In itself, this might not have been especially problematic: there were precedents for such measures. In this case, however, Ambrose evidently made sure that the chalices in question were ones which had been donated to the church by homoian benefactors. He also seems to have diverted some of the proceeds from the sale of the plate to boost his building fund on the grounds that the cemetery basilicas being constructed were providing burial plots for needy Christians. In short, he appears to have been practising opportunism of a conspicuous kind – clearing his attic of assets which to him were tainted by association, while furthering his scheme to extend the physical presence of his church, all in the name of public sacrifice in the interests of a good cause (Brown 1992: 96).

At the time of his consecration, Ambrose's brother Satyrus had abandoned his career in order to devote his life to assisting with the administration of the see, renouncing all his own rights to marry or to make a will – a huge sacrifice. Satyrus undertook the supervision of the family estates, with a view to maximizing the income accrued by the Milanese church. He had, it appears, always been of delicate constitution, and on a return trip from Africa in the late summer of 378 he fell ill and died. His death was undoubtedly a major blow to Ambrose. The brothers had always been close, and their working lives had been intertwined to an unusual degree. But Ambrose did not miss the opportunity to define Satyrus' importance to the Milanese community, and by implication to signal his own significance as civic leader as well. His funeral sermon offered a highly wrought lament, sketching Satyrus' character throughout with reference to the supporting role he played to the bishop. The personal grief is clearly intense, but the formal conventions of the classical *consolatio* genre also shine through unmistakably (Duval 1977; Savon 1980). However acute his loss, it provided scope for him to impress his authority upon his people through the art of rhetorical performance (Biermann 1995).

All the while, Ambrose faced increasingly serious hostility within his community. His footsteps were dogged in particular by the presence of one Iulianus Valens, a homoian bishop who (presumably because of the barbarian invasions) had fled to Milan from his native Pettau in Noricum. Valens established a rival community in direct opposition to Ambrose. In addition, the anti-pope Ursinus seems to have stirred up some hard-line Nicenes to protest against what they perceived to be the compromising pragmatism of Ambrose's refusal to reform the overall structure of Auxentius' clergy. Ursinus himself was not a homoian (he was primarily interested in making life difficult for his real *bēte noire*, Damasus), but Ambrose pictures Valens and him in an unholy alliance, for his activities lent added weight to the cause of the Arian opposition (*Ep. extra coll.* 5 [11].3). Although the strength of

these hostile forces continues to be underestimated by one or two scholars (e.g. Kaufman 1997), it was in fact considerable. Dissident household meetings seem to have been held, with distinct liturgies and apparent plots against Ambrose. Ursinus was exiled to Cologne in 375/6, but this was probably in punishment for the behaviour of his supporters at Rome rather than as a consequence of the trouble he had caused in Milan; evidently there was no official sanction of his activities there. Ambrose made matters considerably worse for himself with the homoians by intervening in a synod in his former base of Sirmium, more than 500 miles away, to ensure the election of a Nicene candidate as bishop in late 377 or early 378. This highly questionable involvement in the ecclesiastical affairs of a territory quite outside of his jurisdiction (which implied that Ambrose was prepared to take a heavier hand outside Milan than he was yet in a position to do on his own patch) provoked a furious protest locally in Illyricum, where the homoian community was strongly entrenched.

Most ominously of all, it incurred the wrath of the strongly pro-Arian Justina, mother of another son of Valentian I, the young man who would become Valentinian II; her influence over the church at Sirmium was considerable. By forcing the result, Ambrose had directly insulted Justina. It would only be a matter of time before she sought her revenge, in collusion with the homoians of Milan.

Valentinian I died in 375, having arranged his succession so that his brother Valens would rule in the East and his teenage son Gratian in the West. When Valentinian's half-brother, the young Gratian, arrived in Sirmium after the disastrous defeat by the Goths at Adrianople in 378, where Valens himself was killed, it appears that he was met with warnings from the local homoian clergy that Ambrose's theology deserved to be investigated more closely. Probably they feared that his coup in the recent election would lead to further cross-border activities. Gratian was a devout youth, but he clearly lacked the theological knowledge to decide for himself. He opted to request from Ambrose a statement of his faith (Nautin 1974). Ambrose did not respond at once, perhaps because he knew that Gratian was due to visit Milan soon afterwards on his return to Gaul. When they subsequently met, in the summer of 379, Ambrose managed to impress the emperor and his entourage sufficiently to prevail upon Gratian to silence the homoians (*Ep. extra coll.* 12 [1].2). Evidently the pressure upon Ambrose from these opponents was serious: in a number of references stemming from this period, he warns of the dangers of false prophets leading the faithful astray or, fox-like, stealing sheep from the true fold (e.g. *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam* 7.28–31, 44–53). When Gratian returned to Milan in the spring of the following year, he was presented with the initial stages in Ambrose's first public manifesto against Arianism, the opening two books of his *De fide* (Markschies 1995: 165–212, esp. 197ff.; Williams 1995: 128–53).

Ambrose's argument amounted to a full-scale attack on the theology of the homoians. With remarkable boldness, it is presented not as a defence of the bishop's personal beliefs but as a specially commissioned articulation of a doctrinal position already espoused by the emperor. Ambrose does everything in his power to dissuade Gratian from becoming attracted to homoian ideas while on his forthcoming campaign against the Goths, but he poses not as an apologist but as a spiritual spokesman. As the first serious evidence of his reading in Greek authorities, the work might seem at first glance a rather weak piece of intellectual endeavour (Hanson 1988: 669–75). Ambrose refuses to differentiate between the various strands of 'Arianism'. The homoians are lumped in with those of much more radical beliefs, such as Aetius and Eunomius, who denied that God the Father and God the Son bore any likeness at all according to essence (Vaggione 2000). At another level, however, the broad-brush polemic reflects Ambrose's commitment to a more general pro-Nicene effort to characterize 'Arian' theologies *en bloc* in thoroughly negative terms. The text carries a poignant political message which gives an important clue to his ideological strategy. The Gothic triumph at Adrianople and the ensuing ravages of the Danubian provinces are depicted in the last paragraphs (*Fid.* 2.136–43) as a divine judgement on 'Arian' strongholds; fidelity to the true faith, conversely, would guarantee a resounding Roman victory this time around. Ambrose was sounding a note that would become a familiar refrain: theological orthodoxy and the security of the empire are all of a piece (Palanque 1933: 325–35; Meslin 1964; Sordi 1988; Inglebert 1996: 297–309; Berndt and Steinacher 2014).

On his return to Illyricum, Gratian showed the work to Palladius of Ratiaria, the most senior and the ablest of the local bishops (Meslin 1967: 111–34). Palladius issued a sharp rejoinder, refuting Ambrose's misrepresentation of the homoian position and inviting him to engage in a direct debate (Palladius, *Apology* 81–7: McLynn 1991). Palladius was aware that Gratian had decided to convene a general council at Aquileia the following year, intended to resolve the differences between the Nicene and homoian parties, and on the basis of the logic evidenced in *De fide* 1–2, he must have been confident of his own chances of victory in an open encounter with Ambrose. Probably at his encouragement, Gratian requested further clarification from Ambrose, who opted to wait until the emperor had left Illyricum and was safely back at Trier, far from Palladius' influence, before he replied. He promised to fulfil the emperor's request, and once again deliberately turned around Gratian's plea for further information to make it sound as if the emperor's doctrine was confirmedly in line with his own (*Ep. extra coll.* 12 [1]). He rushed off a further three books to *De fide* and followed these up with another three *De Spiritu Sancto*, the first treatise on the Holy Spirit in the West. Once again, the theological energy was obvious, though the key points were heavily derived from Greek authorities, and the clarity with which they were expressed was not always profound. Notably, Ambrose declined to engage directly with Palladius' criticisms of his earlier work.

Throughout this time, Ambrose's position in Milan remained precarious. One illustration of this can be glimpsed in his reference in *De Spiritu Sancto* 1 to a (presumably recent) attempt to sequestrate a basilica in Milan in the name of the emperor (*Spir.* 1.19–21). The episode may well have been orchestrated by Justina, who had arrived in the city at some point after Adrianople. If so, it was a clear act of revenge for Ambrose's earlier humiliation of her at Sirmium, and a direct plea on behalf of the Milanese homoians (Williams 1994). Even if Justina was not directly behind it, her presence would undoubtedly have emboldened the homoians to press their case that worship in private was no longer good enough: they wanted churches of their own, where they could establish their presence publicly as an official opposition to Ambrose. In this particular case, the order was rescinded, perhaps when Gratian himself arrived in the city, but it reflects tensions which were all too real. The quest for territory was to prove an enduring concern in the years that followed (Maier 1994).

A reversal of Ambrose's fortunes, however, lay around the corner. The catalyst was Gratian's plan for a theological council. Late in 378, Gratian had issued an edict of toleration for the East, proclaiming the right of free worship for all religious groups except the Manichaeans, the Photinians (who denied the pre-existence of Christ), and the Eunomians (*Codex Theodosianus* 16.5.5). However, shortly after his accession to the purple in January of 379, his new colleague Theodosius for his part had expressly proclaimed that 'all peoples' should follow the 'Catholic' faith as articulated by pope Damasus and Peter of Alexandria (*C.Th.* 16.1.2). There is considerable dispute surrounding this edict: was it a binding legal injunction, implicitly threatening imperial retribution for those who refused to comply, or was it simply a manifesto statement, setting out the new emperor's personal preferences – preferences shaped by minority Nicene pressure from the bishop of Theodosius' base at Thessalonica, Acholius? The latter is more likely; but at any rate the edict reflected Theodosius' concern to have his own say in the theological affairs of the East. In a bid to assert his authority over his junior colleague, Gratian announced that a general council would meet in 381 at Aquileia (a place convenient for both Western and Eastern delegates), but Theodosius was again not to be outdone. He summoned the bishop of Constantinople, Demophilus, and required him to subscribe to the Nicene faith; Demophilus refused and opted to take his congregation into effective exile beyond the city walls. At the beginning of 381, Theodosius then issued a now-famous decree outlawing Arianism along with other sects (*C.Th.* 16.5.6), and in May of that year he convened his own assembly at Constantinople to elect a successor to Demophilus. It looked as if there was little point in Gratian's general council going ahead.

Ambrose, however, had other ideas. First, he saved Gratian the embarrassment of cancelling his council by insisting that the meeting should be held. But, crucially, he also persuaded the emperor that there was no need to call another large-scale gathering of Eastern bishops so soon after Constantinople,

for the dispute was, after all, a private one between himself and a few of his brethren from Illyricum. The upshot was that Aquileia proved to be a mere shadow of what Gratian had originally planned. Ambrose ensured that he was surrounded by a group of staunchly loyal supporters from north Italy and Gaul, while Palladius enjoyed far more limited support. In such a fiercely partisan environment, Ambrose orchestrated an overwhelming condemnation of Palladius, and of his prominent colleague, Secundianus, bishop of Singidunum. He swiftly followed it up with conciliar appeals, not only to Gratian but also to Theodosius himself, to act decisively against the Arians, first by legally enforcing the deposition of Palladius and Secundianus from their sees, and then by removing other menaces, such as the presence of Iulianus Valens in North Italy (*Ep. extra coll.* 4 [10] – 6 [12]). A potentially awkward theological *contretemps* had been turned into a major political advantage. The Ambrose who had been struggling for so long had at last, by sheer opportunism, succeeded in establishing a decisive Nicene bridgehead (Williams 1995: 154–84).

A matter of months before Aquileia, Gratian had officially transferred the Western court from Trier to Milan. Ambrose found himself with unprecedented access to the machinery of government, and he made sure to exploit it to the full. He became an effective lobbyist not only for his own causes but also on behalf of the careers and aspirations of friends and contacts from the local area and beyond, and a giver of strategic hospitality to assorted officials and visiting dignitaries. Such activity called for a delicate balancing act, for his own rhetoric insisted that the affairs of a corrupt world were none of the church's concern (*Off.* 1.185), and that clerics were not to involve themselves in financial disputes (*Off.* 2.125; 3.59), or go around attending the power-dinners of the rich (*Off.* 1.86). Ambrose seemed to manage it, nevertheless, and in the process he reinforced his position as a key player in the political affairs of metropolitan society (Matthews 1975: 191–203).

Palladius, meanwhile, continued to protest against the treatment he had received at Aquileia, but to little avail. The details of his argument were apparently relayed to Ambrose, who happened to be publishing a sermon preached against two Arian courtiers who had criticized him (and had ominously managed to get themselves killed when they had failed to turn up to engage in a debate with him which they themselves had requested: Paulinus, *Vita Ambros.* 18); he was able to add a special section responding to Palladius (*De incarnatione* 79–116), in terms as shallow as before. Ambrose never did (Gottlieb 1973) enjoy the kind of ascendancy over Gratian that he duped his biographers into positing; incidents such as the controversy surrounding the Spanish ascetic, Priscillian of Avila, in which Ambrose's antipathy was drowned out by the agencies of Priscillian's supporter, the *magister officiorum* Macedonius (Chadwick 1976: 111–69), illustrate that. Nevertheless, in the latter days of a regime marked by indecisiveness, his influence over an essentially bored and impressionistic emperor was not inconsiderable. Gratian's weak grasp on power was met with the revolt of the British commander Maximus in 383, and death at the hands of one of Maximus' subordinates at Lyon; it was easy for Ambrose to portray him as an innocent victim of betrayal, fostering the assumption that Gratian had been under his wing all along, and that he had even died with the word 'Ambrose!' on his lips (*In Ps. 61 enarratio* 23–6; *De obitu Valentiniani consolatio* 78–81).

The political significance which Ambrose's agencies had come to assume also brought him a remarkable role in the checking of Maximus' rebellion. In order to gain time for the forces loyal to Valentinian who were gathering under the Frankish general, Bauto, the bishop went in person to Trier to appeal to Maximus for peace (*Epistle* 30 [24]). Valentinian's supporters at Milan also proclaimed their independence from the coup and urged Theodosius to muster forces against the usurper. In the end, no fighting actually took place, for Theodosius was finally persuaded to grant recognition to Maximus in return for the assurance that Valentinian's court was legitimate. But Ambrose, for his part, soon called in the debt for his diplomatic efforts. In 384, the urban prefect of Rome, the distinguished Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, formulated a legal petition seeking the restoration of the altar of Victory, a potent symbol of Rome's traditional religion, to the senate-house, an incident related in detail by Bill Leadbetter in Chapter 10 of this work. Ambrose led the attack on Symmachus. He guaranteed that the direst of consequences would ensue if the altar were restored,

for this would symbolize a capitulation on the part of a Christian emperor to the old religious order. Reminding the court of its personal debt to him in his embassy to Trier, he warned Valentinian II, who was a teenage ruler of obvious vulnerability, that he would face the full opposition of his bishop if he chose to heed the pagans' case. Not surprisingly, the threats worked and Symmachus' petition was rejected (Wytzes 1936; Klein 1972; Matthews 1975: 203–11).

Valentinian's relations with Ambrose were, however, destined to run anything but smoothly. In part, this was because of the influence of Justina, forever characterized by the bishop as the Jezebel of the fourth century (or by Palanque 1933: 140 as the Catherine de Medici of Arianism). But it took more than the will of the queen-mother to make any onslaught (*infestatio*, as Ambrose would call it: *Off.* 1.72) against the bishop and his church a reality, particularly when the pursuit of such a vendetta would conceivably jeopardize political stability. Justina's machinations must have been only part of a tenuous but sinister alliance of hostile forces, in which the lead was taken by the homoians themselves. Chief among the latter was one Mercurinus Auxentius (Williams 1995: 202–10), a former protégé of Ulfila, the so-called 'apostle' to the Goths during the reign of Constantius II (Heather and Matthews 1991: 133–53). As bishop of Durostorum on the Lower Danube, Auxentius had been recognized by Palladius as a potential challenger to Ambrose, and after being removed from his see by Theodosius he found refuge in Milan, probably in the second half of 384. The ensuing period witnessed a revival of the homoians' prospects (Williams 1995: 185–217). Its climax, in the years 385–6, amounted to the most serious crisis of Ambrose's episcopate. Yet that crisis would also become the defining moment in his effort to assert his authority over his own territory once and for all, and to establish the catholics as the definitive Christian community of Milan.

The pretext for battle was, once again, the vexed issue of space for worship. In the spring of 385, Ambrose was summoned to the imperial palace to be informed that the emperor wished to have a cathedral in which the court's worship could be led by homoian clergy: one of the bishop's basilicas, probably the Basilica Portiana, just outside the city walls, was to be handed over forthwith (*Ep.* 75a [*C. Aux.*].29). This ultimatum was a direct rebuttal of Ambrose's earlier attempt to dominate Valentinian (though, by way of diplomacy, it was delivered courtesy of a special invitation to the bishop to attend the imperial consistory). Ambrose had, however, apparently informed his supporters that he had been called to the palace, and the meeting was interrupted by a crowd clamouring that the churches of God must remain inviolate. Fearing a public riot, the court had little option but to back down.

On 23 January of the following year, a law was issued (*C.Th.* 16.1.4) requiring freedom of worship for those who followed the (Arian) faith as specified at the councils of Rimini (359) and Constantinople (360). The language of the directive warned that there would be firm retaliation against any who resisted or claimed that such freedom was theirs alone; any such responses would be treated as treasonous. The law was a clear violation of the spirit of Theodosius' edict of 380, and, in so far as it was designed to prevent another popular uprising against the right of homoians to worship in their own space, it was equally clearly targeted at Ambrose. In all probability, it was framed with the direct involvement of Auxentius, as Ambrose himself contended (*Ep.* 75a [*C. Aux.*].16, 22, 24). The issue now was not just about a private site for the liturgical use of the emperor and his retinue; this time there was an implicit validation of the entire homoian community which had existed in opposition to Ambrose from the start.

In late March, just prior to Easter, Ambrose was once again issued with a request for a church. Now it was no longer the Basilica Portiana, but the central Basilica Nova itself that was sought (the chronology and topography of the affair are both subject to considerable scholarly dispute: see, in particular, Van Haeringen 1937; largely followed by Lenox-Conyngham 1982b; Gottlieb 1985; McLynn 1994: 158–219; cf. Nauroy 1988; see also Barnes 2000; Colish 2002). This demand for the bishop to give up his own cathedral can hardly have been fully serious, but Ambrose was reminded of the sanctions destined to follow upon any violation of the January law. He replied that a bishop had no power to surrender a 'temple of God', and implicitly appealed to his people to back him in his

resistance of any infringement upon their rights (*Ep.* 76 [20].2). At a meeting in his church next day, proceedings were interrupted by the arrival of the praetorian prefect, who came with new orders. It was not the Basilica Nova that was being sought for the emperor's use after all, it was said, but the Basilica Portiana. Ambrose's congregation themselves shouted a firm refusal. On Palm Sunday, the bishop was celebrating worship in his church when news came that the Basilica Portiana was being decked with imperial banners, evidently in preparation for use by the emperor and his entourage. It was also reported that a group from his own congregation, going to occupy the church for themselves, had violently assaulted a homoian presbyter (probably a court chaplain). He managed to send some of his men to rescue the unfortunate priest, but it was clear that the situation had taken an unpleasant turn. A severe fine was imposed on the *corpus negotiatorum* from which the rioters had come, and a number of them were imprisoned. It now seemed entirely possible that the court would deploy force to evict the catholics.

Nevertheless, emboldened by the persistence of his supporters, Ambrose refused to comply with a further demand to persuade them to give up the Basilica Portiana, arguing that he was bound by a higher obligation than any human law not to betray 'divine' property (*Ep.* 76 [20].8); he could not, however, challenge the actual legality of the state's claim in the circumstances. Troops were sent to blockade the church, and things threatened to turn nasty when a contingent of them also entered the Basilica Nova while Ambrose was conducting a service. In the event, the latter group, Nicene sympathizers themselves, were induced to desert. Strengthened by this, Ambrose proceeded to deliver a passionate sermon, urging his congregation to remain steadfast in the cause of truth, and asserting that the basilicas were not Caesar's but God's (*Ep.* 76 [20].19). At the news that the imperial hangings had been removed from the Basilica Portiana, he dispatched some clergy to join the occupiers of the church. This was a tactical mistake: it now appeared incontrovertible that he was supporting the sedition of the people directly. The news that the imperial hangings had been damaged worsened matters further. Ambrose denied any involvement in the affray, but fearing that he might be arrested he opted to remain in his church with his congregation during the night of Wednesday of Holy Week. It was during this vigil that he made one of his most successful and ultimately enduring moves: he introduced his congregation to the Eastern practice of antiphonal singing. The process fostered a sense of solidarity in tense circumstances and provided a stunningly effective channel for popularizing the idioms of Nicene theology, for Ambrose's followers were given not just Psalms to sing, but hymns of his own composition. The faithful stood together and sang together while Satan's forces – or the devotees of a lesser theology – prowled at the doors (cf. Augustine, *Conf.* 9.7.15). The 'Ambrosian hymn', typically eight stanzas of basic iambic dimeters, was to become a widely imitated form: brilliantly, yet almost by accident, Ambrose had devised a formula which would revolutionize Western liturgical practice (Fontaine 1992; Dunkle 2016). Hilary of Poitiers before him had sought to develop the metrical hymn as a medium for doctrinal teaching in the West, but it took Ambrose's delicate poetic gift, the spell of his charisma and the intensity of his followers' emotions in an hour of crisis to make congregational singing really catch on.

On Maundy Thursday, while the bishop addressed his people, news arrived that the emperor had ordered the withdrawal of the soldiers from the Basilica Portiana and the repayment of the fines imposed on the businessmen. But the affair was not entirely over. After Easter, Ambrose was summoned before the imperial consistory to engage in a debate with Auxentius, the outcome of which was to be decided by a panel of judges nominated by the contestants and chaired by the emperor himself. The bishop would be less confident, it was assumed, off his own ground. He declined to comply and withdrew to his church in the company of his congregation. The arrival of troops outside provided him with the opportunity to create another (this time imaginary) siege environment. In reality, the government had presumably sent some soldiers merely to forestall further public disturbances, but the scenario allowed Ambrose to argue that he was in no position to come to the palace. Once again, the singing and liturgy went on day and night, this time for a number of days. A final summons was then issued: the bishop must either nominate his arbiters for the debate or else leave the city.

Evidently his congregation feared that he might take the latter course, and he had to reassure them that he would face martyrdom rather than abandon his church. To the court's demands, he responded with a sermon against Auxentius (*Ep.* 75a [*C. Aux.*]), a brilliant appeal to his people's sense of outrage that a man of God should yield to the will of evil schemers. He deliberately conflates the January law with Valentinian's orders to engage in dialogue with Auxentius. In an official letter of reply to the emperor (*Ep.* 75 [21]), he paints Auxentius as a dangerous upstart, not fit to debate with one such as himself. He contends that the January law would have to be rescinded in its entirety before any such debate could take place, for if Auxentius were to be defeated this would logically invalidate it. He would, he claimed, be most willing to come and discuss matters of the faith – only his clergy and congregation would not let him.

Faced with such skilful evasion, such obstinacy in the guise of reasonableness, Valentinian had few choices left, particularly since there were veiled threats from Maximus and renewed problems on the Danube frontier. Ambrose had gained the upper hand by a combination of audacity, legal posturing and a fortuitous turn of political events. He wasted no time in pressing his advantage. In June of 386, construction was completed on a magnificent new cathedral, to be known as the Basilica Ambrosiana, where the bishop himself intended to be buried, in the Hortus Philippi west of the city centre, close by the resting place of the martyr Victor and of his own brother Satyrus (Mirabella Roberti 1984: 120–4). At the dedication ceremony, Ambrose pledged that the building would be decorated appropriately if the remains of some martyrs could be discovered. Next day, he led his people to the memorial to the celebrated martyrs Nabor and Felix, and gave his clerics orders to start digging nearby. Not surprisingly, they soon discovered remains, which were claimed to be those of another two martyrs, Gervasius and Protasius, who were believed to have suffered under Nero; the names were attested by a 'demon' being exorcized from an elderly woman. Amidst great rejoicing from the bishop's supporters, the skeletons were solemnly transported to the new church for re-interment; en route, even fleeting contact with the bones is said to have proved sufficient to heal all sorts of diseases among the attending crowds (Doignon 1956; Zangara 1981).

Ambrose's opponents are said to have made accusations that the whole thing was staged by the bishop (Paulinus, *Vita Ambros.* 15), and for all his protests about their impiety (*Ep.* 77 [22].16–23), they were doubtless right. But whatever the identity of the relics, what mattered was the impact that the discovery and ceremonial transference of them had upon the volatile Milanese community. Ambrose had provided a spectacular distraction from the tensions of the previous weeks; he had also signalled that even if his foes had him killed, they would not be able to remove what he stood for: a martyred bishop would be commemorated in noble company in a vast new shrine. His tactics presupposed the growing significance of the cult of the martyrs in the late fourth century (Grig 2004), and its ability to evoke powerful passions in a people already stirred by religious fervour (Brown 1981: 36–7). It was not hard for him to connect the *inventio*, the demonic testimonies, and the miraculous healings with fidelity to a theological cause, and to foster the idea that here was reward for spiritual steadfastness (Dassmann 1975). In the end, hopelessly outstaged by the excitement the bishop had inspired, the court gave up in its pursuit of its cause. The January law may or may not have been formally repealed; either way, it was dropped in practice. Rather than risk a further outbreak of potentially more serious anarchy, and increasingly preoccupied elsewhere with the problem of Maximus, Valentinian was advised to abandon the campaign his mother had supported. There were various gestures of reconciliation: Ambrose, for his part, undertook another mission to Maximus at Trier, which in the event did little or nothing to help the cause of peace. Valentinian's regime was nevertheless left fatally wounded by its encounter with Ambrose's intransigence, and within a matter of months the emperor and his retinue were in flight from Maximus' invading forces.

Nothing served to define Ambrose's style so much as this struggle with the forces of Arianism. His victory was won only through his gift for creating the impression that he was always in control, most of all when it must have been anything but true, and for portraying the sense that God was on his side. That is not to denigrate his personal courage, for the possibility of suffering violence or even

martyrdom was at points in the crisis real for him as well as for his supporters. But the whole episode revealed his ability to exploit mass emotion and to use his own networks to achieve vital leverage in desperate circumstances. Much of his assurance, for example, only made sense if he had contacts able to supply him with information about developments in his enemies' ranks, and much of his ability to persuade others to support his cause depended on his knack of extracting all the compliance that episcopal *auctoritas* could muster. Ambrose knew how to manipulate crowds while remaining aloof from the uglier side of their actions; he could seem to be one with the sufferers while pleading his willingness to be reasonable with the authorities responsible for the peril to which they were exposed (MacMullen 1990).

Ambrose's initial relations with Theodosius, the swift victor over Maximus' forces in the summer of 388, were conditioned by his existing standing with Valentinian. While in retreat at Thessalonica, Valentinian had repudiated his past homoian allegiances, perhaps in the wake of his mother's death. Ambrose was happy to welcome him back to Milan, and to glory in the triumph of orthodoxy in yet another military confrontation. Theodosius, who accompanied him home, had clear Nicene credentials, but Ambrose lacked the kind of diplomatic history with his inner circle that he had built up with Valentinian's. His strategy, instead, was to use the political profile he had already secured to impress Theodosius with the authoritative grandeur he saw as attaching to his episcopal role.

A famous incident illustrates his approach. At the end of 388 there occurred a riot in the city of Callinicum, on the Euphrates, in which a Christian mob, led by the local bishop, plundered and burned down a synagogue. Theodosius, consulted by regional officialdom, responded by ordering that the perpetrators be punished and the bishop made to bear the cost of rebuilding the synagogue in person. When Ambrose got wind of this, he reacted sternly, urging Theodosius to revoke his orders, on the grounds that no bishop could with a good conscience be responsible for the construction of a synagogue, a place of 'idolatry'. He even claimed that he himself had validated the Callinicum mob's activities (*Ep*. 74 [40].8). Theodosius decided to rescind the fine, but Ambrose wanted more. He argued that the whole case should be dropped. His logic, set out in a skillfully crafted letter to the emperor (*Ep*. 74 [40]), reflects some starkly anti-Semitic sentiment, from which even his least critical admirers have felt obliged to recoil (e.g. Homes Dudden 1935: 372–9; on such tendencies generally in this period, see Wilken 1983; Millar 1992). It also raised enduring questions about the legitimacy of violence in a religious cause. On the next occasion when he preached in the presence of Theodosius, Ambrose went further and directly appealed for a pardon to be extended to the rioters. When the emperor and his party protested that having commuted the original sentence they still had every right to punish those who had defied law and order, Ambrose refused to continue with the service until he got his own way. Theodosius elected to give in. The situation is depicted by the bishop (*Ep. extra coll.* 1 [41]) as a personal triumph, and it has traditionally been interpreted as a daring confrontation – a bold churchman reducing an emperor to a humiliating climb-down, an episcopal Nathan rebuking an imperial David (Paulinus, *Vita Ambros*. 23, influencing, e.g. Palanque 1933: 219). In fact, it is likelier that Theodosius recognized the political capital to be made out of a measured gesture of beneficence: by exercising clemency, he guaranteed himself the affection and gratitude of the Italian Nicenes, whom his advisers had been working hard to win over.

Another incident which reflects the same abilities on the part of Ambrose occurred in the summer of 390 in the city of Thessalonica and is described by Bill Leadbetter in Chapter 10 of this work. A popular charioteer was arrested and put in prison for allegedly making sexual advances to one of the attendants of Botheric, the commander of the local garrison. The people rioted and Botheric was killed, along with other officials. When news of this serious outrage reached Theodosius, extreme retaliation was ordered. It is improbable that Theodosius acted simply in anger, without serious consideration of the consequences; but however the decision was made, he endorsed a punitive plan that yielded nothing to clemency (McLynn 1994: 315–23). The garrison at Thessalonica was given orders to execute the faction responsible for the revolt. The details of the order may well have been misunderstood, or the troops were determined to wreak much severer vengeance than had been mandated,

for in the space of a few hours a considerable number of innocent residents of the city, possibly up to 7,000 in all (Theodoret, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.17), were brutally massacred. The true perpetrators of the murder of Botheric may well have escaped. Theodosius, faced with public outrage on a large scale, attempted to distance himself from the atrocity, implying that it was an act of blood-lust by an army stationed far from his immediate control, but he was obliged to bear ultimate responsibility. Ambrose saw to it that Theodosius did public penance for this massacre by threatening, in effect, excommunication if he did not.

Ambrose never did cement the kind of dominant relationship with Theodosius that many historians have imagined. His prevarication in dealing with Eugenius, Valentinian's successor in 392–3, reflected an enduring sense of uncertainty as to what would be politically expedient. Ambrose was caught between an initial attitude of warmth towards Arbogast's new Augustus and a desire to wait and see which way Theodosius himself would go. When Eugenius invaded Italy in the spring of 393, Ambrose opted to leave Milan (while away, he managed to preside over the exhumation of further martyr relics at Bologna: *Exh. virg.* 1–10; Paulinus, *Vita Ambros.* 29), returning only when Eugenius' forces had vacated the city the following year. He himself presents this as a measured decision to rebuff one who, for all his Christian professions, had given into demands from his pagan supporters for subsidies for their cults (*Ep. extra coll.* 10 [57]; cf. Paulinus, *Vita Ambros.* 26.3); more probably, he anticipated the embarrassment of meeting Eugenius after finally opting to side with Theodosius against him. Theodosius' triumph was naturally greeted by Ambrose with rejoicing, and the emperor's death not long afterwards in January 395 gave him the final opportunity to claim Theodosius as his own. The ebbs and flows which had marked their relations were speedily forgotten, and the bishop's eloquent funeral eulogy (*De obitu Theodosii oratio*) proclaimed Theodosius as a model Christian ruler and patron of a Nicene faith that had now definitively captured the West (Duval 1977: 274–91). Ambrose was himself to die just over two years later, on 4 April 397, from an illness incurred after a trip to Pavia, before the imperial dream was shattered, when Stilicho, the Vandal general whom Theodosius had appointed regent over his sons Honorius and Arcadius, lost control, and Milan itself became a potential prey to the invading Goths. His political prominence in these last years, under a governor whose Christianity was nominal, had not been so great, and he had been spared the turmoil of the cataclysmic times which lay ahead.

Ambrose had served his episcopate as a remarkably political figure, in close proximity to a succession of emperors and their courts, over a critical period in the history of the later Western empire. Against a disparate but powerful range of opponents (Cracco Ruggini 1974, who nevertheless overstates the degree to which they constituted an organized alliance), and in the face of often considerable tensions with the imperial powers, he had learned to develop a style which, for all its ambiguities, was outstandingly effective. Almost nothing about the process had been as straightforward as Ambrose had managed to make it seem; but manage he had. At once a kind of fusion of Old Testament prophet and judge and the epitome of the classical public man, he had skilfully succeeded in presenting himself as power-broker and spiritual mentor to the highest authorities, one capable of moving with assurance and impact at the ultimate levels of political influence, articulating a message which combined intellectual conviction and social respectability. It was a *persona* designed to reflect an unswerving belief that his version of truth would inevitably prevail, and that a Christianized empire meant the sure triumph of the Nicene faith, not just over the impieties of every theological alternative, but over the social and ethical structures of its cultural inheritance.

Creating an ecclesial community

When Ambrose assumed office, the Nicene-Arian divisions were only part of the problems afflicting the church in north Italy. The region's bishoprics, each with its own traditions and practices, were spread across a considerable area. Milan, for all its political significance, still needed to evolve an ecclesial identity distinct from Rome's by weaving its independent customs into a tighter and

more confident package. The smaller sees required their larger neighbour to provide them with a kind of symbolic leadership. Milan had to find a way of being both the chief mediator of Rome's authority and the figurehead for a proudly particular northern church (Lizzi 1990; Humphries 1999). The obvious political instability of the 370s and 380s made the need for social cohesion within these communities all the greater. Ambrose was able to capitalize on a *Zeitgeist* which reflected both a sense of uncertainty and a growing perception of the need to consolidate the north Italian church within its own sphere.

His spirituality presupposed a dialectical tension between two worlds, the seen and the unseen, the literal and the spiritual, the temporal and the eternal (Seibel 1958). He carefully engendered what has aptly been described as a 'siege mentality', whereby the church, devoted to the service of Christ, the true 'emperor', was to be seen as surrounded by the evil forces of the *saeculum* (epitomized variously by Manichees, pagans and 'Arians' of every kind), whose constant determination, satanically inspired, was to bring about its downfall (Meslin 1967: 51, cited by Brown 1988: 347–8). He combined this rhetorical image of a spiritual warfare against the powers of darkness with a pragmatic exploitation of all the leverage that a Christianized imperial system could secure. His dream was for a church that would simultaneously dominate and transcend its social world. Catholic faith and Roman empire were bound together, but the church was to exercise a prophetic vocation to act as the critic and purifier of the residual corruption of the empire's ethos, for it had an eschatological destiny to surpass any merely human moral configurations. The sensualism, the self-absorption and the material iniquities which characterized the unregenerate human condition were to be decried then remedied in the *ascesis* of devotion to Christ (Dassmann 1965). The social distinctions presupposed by the world were to be overridden: rich and poor, court officials and illiterate peasants, would come together; the emperor was to worship alongside the most vulnerable members of society. To enter this community by baptism was to leave behind the pollution of the world and to become privy to the deep things of God, which only spiritual eyes could see. Sacramental initiation was a profoundly mystical process, its catechesis (Satterlee 2002) a *disciplina arcani* hedged about by solemn warnings about privilege and responsibility, and presided over by a sacerdotal class who were to be seen as the guardians of secret rites as awe-inspiring as those over which the Levites of old presided (Jacob 1990). Through the strictures of the system of public penance, the clerical hierarchy acted not only as gatekeepers but also as guarantors of in-house discipline. To be the *populus Dei* in Milan in the 380s was to be the spiritual offspring of patriarchs, prophets and apostles, in direct continuity with the elect of every age who had been summoned into a life which ascended beyond the standards accepted by a godless world; it was to be destined, at last, for a reward that was heavenly (Hahn 1969; Toscani 1974).

To be effective, the religious mystery of this 'true philosophy' required to be presented in a way that conveyed a powerful sense of cultural assurance. Ambrose's intellectual message was one plank in that strategy. Doubtless a large proportion of his hearers never identified the allusions to Greek texts which he paraded in his sermons, or the evocations of classical literature which lurked in his narratives of biblical stories, when phrases from Vergil and Terence slipped out almost subconsciously, or stereotyped characterizations of money-lenders, legacy-hunters or greedy merchants crept into his generalized moral disquisitions on contemporary social evils (Vasey 1982; Colish 2005). Reading the transcripts or reworked versions of these homilies today, his spontaneous, discursive articulations of scriptural texts may seem unappealing: they are not systematic expositions in any obvious sense. But the density of their style impressed those who first listened to them. When Ambrose preached (as he frequently did) on the Old Testament narratives – the patriarchs, the Psalms, the prophets – the sheer range of his textual reference (which regularly included allusions to the Septuagint, his preferred version, and to variant readings gleaned from authorities such as Origen's *Hexapla*) and the intensity of his delivery conveyed authority and passion, and a mind soaked in the idioms of a scriptural spirituality (Nauroy 1985; Graumann 1994). To the cultivated critics of court society, and to judges like Augustine who understood very well what to look for in an orator, Ambrose came across as a pastor and teacher who knew what he was about. Ambrose recast ancient accounts of moderation in light

of a biblical anthropology. Along the way, he anticipated significant aspects of later Western thinking on natural law (Maes 1967), original sin (Homes Dudden 1935: 612–24), the transformation of the eucharistic elements (Johanny 1968), the veneration of Mary (Neumann 1962; see more generally, Hunter 2009), and the notion of a just war (Swift 1970). If his theological ideas were once seen as heavily derivative, modern scholarship has shown that his personal role in reshaping the concepts he imbibed from his exegetical sources could be significant (Lazzati 1960; Pizzolato 1965, 1978; Auf der Maur 1977; Lucchesi 1977; Savon 1977); his accounts of sacramental regeneration and the moral life of the baptized are profoundly influenced by his own reading of the divine salvific economy set forth in Christian scripture (Smith 2011). Ambrose was indeed a creative thinker. Enemies like Jerome may have mocked him as a plagiarist (Paredi 1964b), but what mattered in the end was that Ambrose's intellectual skills worked for those whom he needed to sway most – the movers and shakers of his own city and their social peers within a wider Italian radius (embracing Rome itself), who needed to be either convinced or reminded that the philosophy of the *saeculum* had been vanquished by a definitive revealed truth (Madec 1974; Lenox-Conyngham 1993). Through a programme of extensive writing, and by publishing redacted versions of his sermons as written treatises (for a basic summary of texts and editions, see Ramsey 1997: 55–68), he was able to drive the message home to as wide a literary public as possible (Colish 2005).

Another vital element in Ambrose's mission was his programme to dominate the physical landscape of his city (Mirabella Roberti 1984; Krautheimer 1987: 69–92). At the very time when he was most under pressure to yield official space to his opponents, he was also most intent on extending the presence of his own community through the rapid construction of churches. Milan came to be encircled by a string of massive new buildings outside the city walls: the Basilica Ambrosiana (Sant' Ambrogio), dedicated with such ceremony in 386, the emblem of Ambrose's

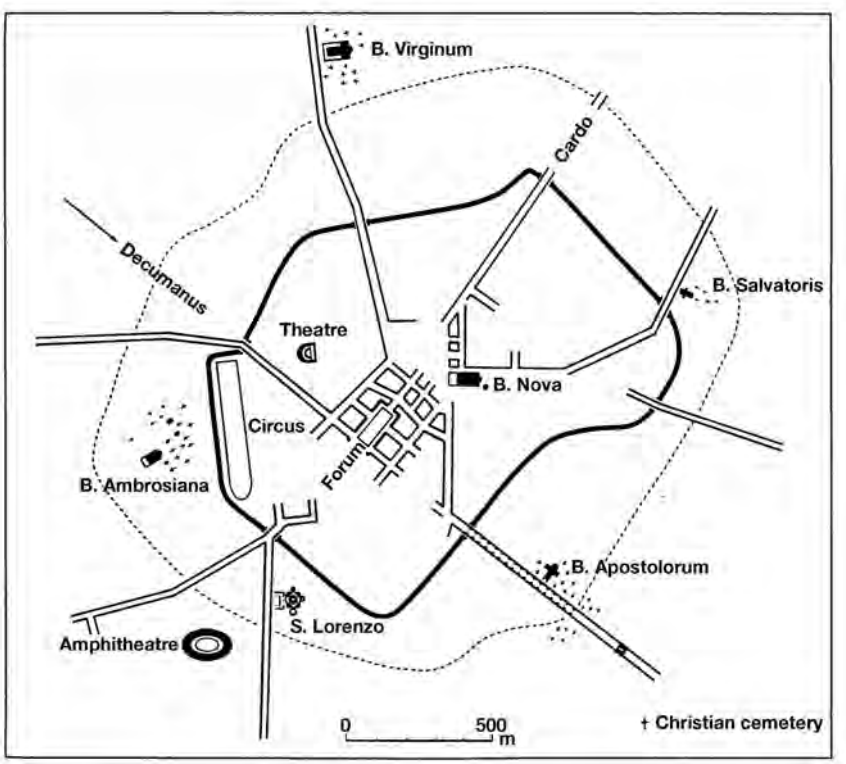

Figure 57.3 Milan *c.* 400, showing location of fourth-century churches; from Krautheimer (1987: 73), by permission of the University of California Press

claim to an ineradicable entry in the religious history of his city; the strikingly impressive Basilica Apostolorum (San Nazaro), the first cruciform basilica to appear in the West, modelled, like a number of its Eastern contemporaries, on Constantine's *Apostoleion* in Constantinople and built strategically on the route taken into Milan by Theodosius, who seems to have donated relics of the evangelists to be housed inside the church; and the Basilica Virginum (San Simpliciano), a smaller cruciform building constructed to the north of the city. (A fourth church, the Basilica Salvatoris (San Donighi) is attributed to Ambrose by later tradition, and marked on Krautheimer's plan of the city (Figure 57.3) but it is improbable that it is as old as the fourth century). The new churches were designed to symbolize that the social triumph of the Nicene *cultus* was irreversible. They were consecrated using liturgical language which was deliberately anti-Arian, and their architectural and decorative elaborations were intended to placard the wealth and status of the Nicene community's benefactors. The ecclesiastical establishment had traditionally been concentrated in the area around the central cathedral; now it had colonized suburbia.

A third great feature in Ambrose's strategy was the reformation of his ecclesiastical hierarchy. In his early years, as we saw, his options in this area were limited; but by the second half of the 380s his retinue looked very different. Some of his clergy had perhaps been successfully converted to their leader's theological stance; a large proportion were very probably weeded out and replaced by younger men carefully selected for their malleability (it is also clear that there had been some attrition of staff during the Arian crisis: cf. *Off.* 1.72). Ambrose's most famous literary legacy, penned in the late 380s, is his *De officiis*, a treatise on moral responsibilities based upon Cicero's famous text of the same name and significantly influenced by his version of Stoic ethics (Davidson 2002). As Cicero wrote for his son, Marcus, and for a politically ambitious class of young Roman gentlemen living amidst the *débācle* of the Republic in 44 BCE, Ambrose writes for his spiritual 'sons', the clergy of Milan. His aim is not to build bridges between the gospel and secular philosophy, or to create a systematic parody of a celebrated classical exemplar, but to adapt the Ciceronian paradigms to a new, Christian context, and to show that the old account of duties has been superseded by a moral framework which goes much further. His anticipated readers are not only ecclesiastics; he also intends the work to be perused by non-Christians who will be able to compare his exposition of biblical morality with the details of the Ciceronian text around which it is structured. For both classes of reader, his message is that a new élite has emerged, one that is concerned no longer with the service of the *saeculum* but with a nobler end, which it must realize by profounder means. To be in the service of God is to be called to a higher path of 'perfect duty', modelled on Christ's self-sacrifice and oriented towards conformity to his image. Many of the assumptions of the classical patterns of correct behaviour are still regarded as critical – clerics are to be paragons of 'seemliness', walking, talking and conducting themselves in a way which reveals a true self-mastery and 'manliness' (Kuefler 2001), and thus impressing a watching world with their social finesse. Some aspects of the cardinal virtues, notably of mental fortitude and temperance, remain very close to the Roman Stoic ideals. But others are quite different. Prudence is no longer viewed simply as practical good-sense: it is, in an ultimate sense, the fear and knowledge of God. Justice is not just about giving to each his or her own; it is also, supremely, about Christian charity, the civic euergetism (cf. generally Holman 2001; Brown 2002) of a new, spiritually commissioned officialdom (Becker 1994). The 'effeminacy' and uncouthness traditionally abhorred in the public figure no longer reflect mere ill-breeding; they now bespeak compromise with the defilements of the corrupt world of the flesh. The *athleta Christi* ('Christ's athlete') or the *Dei miles* ('God's soldier') is to be seen to be a conqueror over tendencies that are both aesthetically distasteful and repugnant to God; he is to be chaste, self-denying, altruistic, pure, heavenly-minded and conscious of his ultimate accountability to a divine judge. Virtue and expediency, rightly conceived, are the same thing precisely because each of them is directed towards and determined by the prospect of eschatological reward.

De officiis represents a literary dissemination of a vision which was also expressed through preaching, personal example and letter-writing (Zelzer 1997; Liebeschuetz 2005), and backed up locally

by a strict code of discipline. Ambrose succeeded in surrounding himself with subordinates who followed the very norms which he himself had laboured to polish; his own priestly ideal, a distinctive synthesis of images drawn from the Hebrew *cultus*, the classical tradition and the Pastoral Epistles (Gryson 1968; Bonato 1987; Coppa 1992), was passed on. Evidently he had no shortage of clerical candidates: as a metropolitan see, regarded as a valuable springboard for ecclesiastical promotion, Milan attracted plenty of young men ready and willing to be schooled in the bishop's ways. From this mini-seminary environment, a number of his trainees went on to episcopal office elsewhere, sometimes directly (and controversially) through Ambrose's engineering. Through regular correspondence and personal contacts with these and other brethren whom he deemed worthy of direct encouragement and instruction, Ambrose built up a considerable network of loyal supporters throughout north Italy and beyond. By ensuring that these satellites looked to him as their leader and remained faithful to the standards he strove to inculcate, he saw to it that the next generation of leaders was equipped to reinforce the social dominance of their church as the new century dawned (Lizzi 1990). The *episcopi* of the future, having learned to style themselves in the same basic way as the patrons, guides and regulators of their communities, would head up an ecclesial hierarchy fashioned after their mentor's example (Davidson 2002: 1:73–95).

For Ambrose, in the end, the whole of life was about being seen to be Christian, and about the rendering of a Christian image that would impress a watching world. That is not to cast doubt on his sincerity, or to suggest that everything about him was a façade. His spiritual commitment and his scriptural reasoning deserve no such suspicion, and the seriousness of his quest to renovate a great deal of his Roman inheritance ought to be beyond dispute. In an age increasingly prone to privatize beliefs and morals, Christian communities today might indeed learn from his passionate concern to demonstrate the validity of his message, and to work out intellectual, social and political routes by which to commend it to its critics. In any case, Ambrose lived in a time and culture uniquely susceptible to the potency of the particular image he laboured to present, and by styling his ministry as he did he proved to be one of the major architects of catholicism's victory in the fourth-century West. We can hardly ignore the questionable realities of some of his methods, or the intellectual as well as political challenges which confronted his pursuit of cultural success at the confluence of different worlds. But if we can hold in our mind's eye both the remarkable nature of his achievements and the complexity of his tactics, we may at least avoid some of the mistakes into which earlier historians have fallen. We may, in fact, have begun to glimpse the only Ambrose who ultimately matters.

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58
AUGUSTINE

Carol Harrison

The importance of Augustine for Western Christianity cannot be over-estimated.[1] Born in Africa in 354, he spent almost half of his life as the bishop of the North African seaport, Hippo Regius (modern Annaba, Algeria). Here, drawing on his classical education, his former career as a rhetor, and his experience as a priest, preacher, teacher and pastor, he turned his brilliant mind, his persuasive and moving eloquence, and his deep devotion and love of God, to reflect on Christian faith and life for his congregation, and in the process almost singlehandedly transformed the Western Church into the one we recognise today. He preached over 8,000 sermons, which were recorded by scribes; he was the most prolific early Christian theologian, and more has been written on him than any other figure in the Western tradition (with the exception, perhaps, of Shakespeare!).

Figure 58.1 Mosaic from Utica in Tunisia depicting olive cultivation. Photo: J. C. N. Coulston

Augustine's birthplace was the small, traditionally Berber town of Thagaste (modern Souk Ahras, Algeria) in the eastern part of Numidia. His father, Patrick, belonged to that class of modest landowners who were permanently impoverished by the enormous tax burdens imposed by the emperor, which, as a town councillor (*decurion* or *curiale*) he was either obliged to collect from peasant tenants (*coloni*) or pay himself (see Chapter 1 of this volume).

Patrick obviously entertained higher aspirations for his son and was aware that the best way to advance his prospects was to ensure that he obtained that universally recognised, exclusive and distinguishing marker of social prestige and office: a traditional Roman education. This began with the school of grammar in Thagaste where he would have learnt to read a text and study the disciplines of the liberal arts, and then, thanks to a wealthy patron, he went to the school of rhetoric, the art of public speaking, at Madura and Carthage.

The office of rhetor was the highest goal of late antique education; thus, in deciding to become a teacher of rhetoric Augustine entered an aristocracy, not of birth, but of educational formation.[2] He taught at Carthage (376–383) and Rome (383–384) and was eventually appointed to the municipal chair of rhetoric in Milan (384), the imperial capital. From here he could well have aspired to a provincial governorship and to senatorial rank. Instead, in 386, at the age of 32 he abandoned his career, broke off his arranged marriage, relinquished any future hope of financial security or worldly status, and converted to Christianity.

Figure 58.2 *St. Augustine taken to School by St. Monica*, by Nicolo di Pietra (1413–1415), Pinacoteca, Vatican. Photo Wikimedia Commons

Why? Augustine's answer is to be found in his well-known *Confessions*.[3] Here we can read his own account of his life (from infancy, childhood, school, adolescence . . .) and his intellectual journey in search of wisdom, the true philosophy. His autobiographical account of his conversion to Christianity in Books 1–9 is presented as a microcosm of the conversion of creation towards God in Books 11–13, where he comments upon Genesis 1–3. (Book 10 reflects upon his present life as a fallen human being in a fallen world, and therefore on how conversion is not so much the end, as the beginning of his search for God).

The problem with the *Confessions* is that, like all autobiographies, it was written with the benefit of retrospective reflection and interpretation at least ten years after the events he recounts (397–401). They are therefore fundamentally anachronistic and frustrate any attempt to find out what really happened: Augustine had too many critics, too much to defend and justify, too much to teach and recommend to his readers, too much cultural 'baggage', for this. The *Confessions* must therefore be read on his terms.

Conversion of the mind, heart and will

He would obviously like to portray himself as a rather dissolute youth: fighting for milk at his mother's breast, failing to learn Greek at school, stealing pears, enjoying adolescent sexual adventures, deceiving his despairing mother, unable to remain chaste – all this to demonstrate his own sinfulness and the operation of God's grace in bringing him willingly to embrace Christianity.

He also conveys a sense of intellectual earnestness: he read and understood Aristotle's *Ten Categories* at an early age, was tormented by the question of evil and at the age of nineteen was fired by Cicero's *Exhortation to Philosophy* (a text book he read while studying rhetoric) to seek for wisdom, the true philosophy. Turning to the Christian scriptures, his cultured sensibilities found them quite rebarbative – they were 'unworthy to be compared to the majesty of Cicero'. Instead, he became a member of a dualistic, ascetic, gnostic-type religious sect, founded upon the teaching of the prophet Mani (born in Babylonia in 216 CE; see Chapter 46 in this volume). For a time the Manichees seemed to offer Augustine everything for which he had been searching: they claimed to represent a true and purified form of Christianity and criticised precisely those aspects of it which Augustine too had found problematic (contradictory, seemingly immoral scriptures; an anthropomorphic conception of God; an emphasis on faith and authority).[4] He found the communal nature of the sect, its extensive, lavishly illustrated scriptures and above all, its attempt to distance itself from evil matter by extreme asceticism in its 'elect' deeply attractive, even though he himself felt unable to embrace celibacy and joined the lower rank of 'hearers'. At some stage during the nine years he remained in the sect disillusionment began to set in: their claim to possess truth was revealed as mere pseudo-science, their asceticism proved to be more a matter of words than of practice, their dualism raised more problems than it solved, and the much acclaimed Manichee, Faustus, failed to answer any of these problems. On finally breaking with them, Augustine despaired of ever finding the truth, and hints at a period of scepticism in the *Confessions*.

During this period Augustine moved from Rome to the imperial capital, Milan, to take up the municipal chair of rhetoric, secured for him through the influence of Manichaean friends, and it was while he was in Milan that two decisive encounters occurred which completely transformed his thought. The first was with what he describes as 'some books of the Platonists, translated from Greek into Latin' (*Confessions* 7.9.13). It is unclear what exactly Augustine read; scholars generally conclude that it was probably some Latin translations of the Enneads of Plotinus (204–270 CE) (he could not read Greek with any great facility) and maybe some translations of Plotinus' editor and disciple, Porphyry (232–300).[5] Whatever the works were, they revolutionised his thought, in particular, their insight that the true nature of reality was spiritual. Augustine was finally able to free himself from the prevailing materialism of the thinkers of his day, including the Manichees, to find a convincing alternative to anthropomorphic conceptions of God, finally to discover an answer to the

problem of evil (as a privation of the good) and to understand himself as a spiritual being who might find truth in the God who is both the foundation of himself and who transcends him.

The second encounter was with Ambrose, bishop of Milan, whom Augustine heard preach (see Chapter 57 in the volume). Part of Augustine's acquaintance with Neoplatonism no doubt came through his sermons, but what especially struck him at this time was Ambrose's allegorical, spiritual exegesis of scripture, which overcame all the objections which the Manichees' literal, rationalisitic exegesis had posed.

In recounting these events in his *Confessions*, Augustine obviously wishes to persuade his reader (and, of course, himself) of the rational, logical force of the religion he had embraced. In doing so he would have in mind his own critics, who doubted the genuineness of his conversion, and questioned, for example, whether he had really left Manichaeism behind, and also his intellectual peers, to whom Christianity (and especially its scriptures) appeared somewhat illogical, absurd, crude and rather distasteful, and who criticised its credulity in putting faith in authority before reason.

The final dramatic moment of conversion is, however, not a scene of intellectual argument and proof, but a highly emotional turning of his heart and will towards God. The *Confessions* are, in fact, one of the first works of Antiquity to reveal a keen sense and candid portrait of the writer's inner self: his emotions, affections, the intricate and confusing workings of his mind and the depths of his subconscious. This is reflected in their highly charged, vivid poetic language, in dialogue with God.

Describing his gradual ascent towards God in Neoplatonic terms in Book 10, Augustine concludes with the realisation that in fact, he had no need to seek for Him, since God had always been graciously present, calling to him, as seen in the almost rhapsodic 27th chapter.

Sero te amavi, pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam nova, sero te amavi! et ecce intus eras et ego foris, et ibi te quaerebam, et in ista formosa, quae fecisti, deformis inruebam. mecum eras, et tecum non eram. ea me tenebant longe a te, quae si in te non essent, non essent. vocasti et clamasti et rupisti surditatem meam: corucasti, splenduisti et fugasti caecitatem meam: fragrasti, et duxi spiritum, et anhelo tibi, gustavi et esurio et sitio, tetigisti me, et exarsi in pacem tuam.	Late have I loved you, Beauty so ancient and so new, late have I loved you. Yes, you were inside me while I was outside myself. I sought you there and – in my deformity – rushed upon the lovely things of your creation. You were with me, but I was not with you. Holding me far from you were objects which would have had no existence if they did not exist in you. You called! You cried! You shattered my deafness. You glistened! You shone! You put my blindness to flight. You gave off your fragrance and I drew in breath, so now I breathe for you. I tasted you and now I hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am afire for your peace. (Augustine, The *Confessions* 10.27, ET Philip F. Esler)

In *Confessions* 8 he describes the actual moment of his conversion as inspired by a divinely graced reading of a passage from the apostle Paul: hearing a voice chanting *tolle lege* ('take up and read'), he opened the copy of Paul's epistles which he had been reading in the garden of his lodgings at Milan and his eyes fell upon Rom. 13:13, 'Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences' (*Confessions* 8.12.29). Augustine's final conversion was one of his will, away from the temptations, distractions and allurements of the world to true celibacy (*continentia*) – a single-minded, single-hearted devotion to God.

Conversion from Christianity to Christianity

Perhaps most importantly, (and most anachronistically?) he describes his search for truth against the ever-present backdrop of Christianity, as if he was never not a Christian but was merely seeking to reconcile himself to it: he had drunk it in with his mother Monica's milk; he had been dedicated to it as a child; when he read Cicero the only thing he found lacking was the name of Christ; the Manichees attracted him because they claimed to be true Christians (*integri Christiani*); the Sceptics he rejected because Christ was absent from their thought; the Platonists he measured against Christian thought and found wanting. Obviously this way of presenting his conversion again serves to demonstrate the insuperable operation of God's grace, this time in a rather errant intellectual, but more to the point, it passes judgement upon the philosophers and religious cults of Augustine's day and vindicates Christianity as the 'true philosophy' and 'true religion', with Christ as the 'one mediator' between God and humanity. Whereas the philosphers would proudly maintain that truth is accessible to reason or through the cult of the gods,[6] Augustine affirms in the *Confessions* that it is only accessible through the revelation and mediatorship of Christ, and that it is only appropriated by humble faith, hope and love in him. Augustine often uses Rom. 1:19–23 to demonstrate the philosophers' insight into the truth:

> For what can be known about God is plain to them; because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.

But the verses which follow demonstrate the philosophers' pride and guilt, because, although they thereby knew God, they:

> [d]id not give thanks to him as God, but became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles.

The doctrine of the Fall

What was it that brought about this decisive break with his own past life and habits on the one hand, and with ancient philosophy on the other, to precipitate his conversion to such a distinctive form of Christianity? The apostle Paul provides a clue.

Paul was being read and commented upon by many of Augustine's contemporaries, and in the early years of the 390s, Augustine undertook a series of works on Romans and Galatians.[7] It was here that he found the material to articulate his understanding of the nature of moral evil, free will and grace. The question of evil had haunted Augustine from the very beginning of his search for truth, because it, more than anything else, militated against the Christian belief in an omnipotent, just and loving Creator God. The Manichees' dualistic explanation, which attributed evil to matter, but not to the transcendent God, for a while satisfied him, but later raised more problems than it solved: how could God be omnipotent if an independent force of evil could overcome the good? He found an answer to these problems in the notion (probably discovered in Plotinus) that evil is a privation of the good: that everything that exists is good, but insofar as it turns away from the good, it moves towards non-being and thereby becomes evil. Reflecting on his own experience of evil by characteristically turning within in order to analyse his own inner experiences, emotions and passions, he vividly depicts the vitiated, flawed operation of his will, alienated and dissociated from itself, knowing the good but unable to act upon it and thus locates the origin of evil in the turning of the human will away from the good. This was confirmed for him by Paul's portrait of his divided will in Rom. 7:15: 'For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not:

but what I hate, that do I' (although this is very much Paul interpreted by Augustine: as Krister Stendahl has suggested, the sense of agonised interiority which Augustine describes was probably not Paul's own experience [Stendahl 1963]).

In the earlier commentaries on Paul, he seems to have entertained the possibility that God's election of a sinful human being was based on merit, on the person's choice of faith and anticipation of God's grace, and that it was in this way that someone moved from being under the law to being under grace. In a letter written to his friend, the priest Simplicianus, in 396, however, he sets forth, explicitly, a doctrine of original sin which leaves no room for merit, but makes everything hinge upon the operation of God's grace.

In response to Simplicianus' question concerning the fates of Esau and Jacob, which seem to have been determined before their birth, he expounds an uncompromising doctrine of the fallenness of humankind – of human beings as a *massa peccati*, 'one lump in which the original guilt [of Adam] remains throughout' (*Letter to Simplicianus* 2.17, 20) – of the culpability of all human beings, their inability to do the good and the unmerited grace of God which can alone, regardless of faith, reason or works, inspire in them a delight in the good. Romans 7 is therefore interpreted as a portrait of humankind under grace, unable to do anything but sin without the inspiration of God's grace which moves a person's will to delight in the good: 'if these things delight us which serve our advancement towards God, that is due not to our own whim or industry or meritorious works, but to the inspiration of God and to the grace he bestows' (*To Simplicianus* 2.21).

The doctrine of original sin was not, however, Augustine's invention, rather, he was able to draw upon African tradition, not least Cyprian (who also used it to justify the baptism of infants) and Ambrose.[8] He also appeals to a number of scriptural texts, especially 1 Cor. 15:22, 'As in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be given life', and Rom. 5:12, 'in whom [sc. Adam] all sinned' (though, in fact, they are all probably either mistranslated or misconstrued[9]). The doctrine of original sin also makes him incline towards a traducianist (that all souls are derived from that of the first man and handed on from one generation to the next) rather than a creationist (that a particular soul is created for each individual) explanation of the soul's origin. But it is his own experience of humanity's inveterate sinfulness, of the inner conflicts and incapacity of his will, which seems to have provided him with decisive proof of man's falleness. Most especially, it is humankind's concupiscence, their disordered lust, evidenced most forcefully in sexual intercourse, which provides, for Augustine, decisive proof of their subjection to original sin. The will or reason no longer controls the body in the ordered and harmonious fashion which would have characterised all its operations, including intercourse,[10] before the Fall; rather our actions are now characterised by disordered and uncontrolled concupiscence.

In the texts where he discusses the Fall,[11] however, Augustine is at a loss as to how to explain why Adam's will first turned away from his Creator and disobeyed His commandment. He suggests that perhaps the defection of Adam's will was attributable to his original creation from nothing, so that he is liable to move back to nothingness; that Eve, who was the first to be seduced by the serpent, was not yet as advanced in knowledge as Adam; that Adam, in 'friendly benevolence', went along with Eve, rather than abandon her; that he did not think God would deal with him so harshly; that Adam and Eve were already beginning to turn towards themselves in pride; that God foreknew the greater good he would bring from their sin and allowed the serpent to tempt them.

Whatever the reason for the Fall, it meant that Adam and Eve, already mortal, were no longer on the path to immortality but justly subject to death. They no longer enjoyed a direct, intuitive knowledge of God or of each other, but became dependent upon language and signs in order to communicate, a means fraught with difficulties and open to misrepresentation, deception and ambiguity. In turning away from God, they abandoned the source or their existence, that which gave it order, unity and harmony, and thereby found their attention fragmented, scattered and dispersed, attached and held as with glue to the temporal, mutable things to which they had turned. They became aliens and exiles from their true home; deaf and blind to the truth, subject to the whims of

their vitiated will. They were wholly dependent upon the work of God's grace to heal their faculties and to enable them to desire and move towards their lost homeland. Such is Augustine's depiction of all human beings in this life.

Augustine's reflections on original sin, which are in fact present from his earliest works, are the background against which he interpreted, and chose to present, his conversion as the working of God's grace upon a mind which was, in fact, fundamentally alienated and dissociated from itself, which could not apprehend the truth, or will to act, without the revelation of God's grace in the incarnate Son to inspire his faith, hope and love. They also explain his rather daunting post-conversion portrait of himself in *Confessions* Book 10, as someone still subject to temptation, still prone to sin and still wholly dependent upon the grace of Christ, the mediator between God and human beings.[12]

Priest, bishop and monk

For Augustine, conversion to Christianity meant embracing celibacy. Obviously this was not a strict requirement, but it seems that he would be satisfied with nothing less than what he regarded as the acme of the Christian life. Why this was the case is difficult to establish. The highest rank of the Manichees, Augustine's former co-religionists, were distinguished by their celibacy. Asceticism, frequently expressed as celibacy, had long been the ideal of the philosophic life. The ascetic spirit, fostered by the likes of Tertullian, Cyprian and Ambrose in the West, had made significant inroads into Christian life and practice following the conversion of Constantine in 312, as an effective means of keeping alive the martyr spirit and of resisting 'secularisation'. Augustine's first encounter with the famous *Life of Antony*, the Egyptian ascetic, and the story of two civil servants who had embraced celibacy on reading it for the first time, had been very influential in precipitating his conversion. Above all, Augustine seems to have possessed a natural monastic spirit,[13] which found its true home in a community of like-minded individuals, pursuing a common life, in friendship and love. After his baptism in Milan in 387, he immediately set about realising this ideal in a retreat with family and friends at a country villa in the north Italian village of Cassiciacum, where he also began a series of works on such classical subjects as the nature of wisdom, scepticism, the happy life and order.

Although intending to return to his native town of Thagaste with his mother, Monica, and friends to carry out their 'holy enterprise' (*Confessions* 9.9.2), presumably establishing a community, he was forced to spend a year in Rome, due to a blockade of the Mediterranean in 387–388. Here he no doubt became better acquainted with the vigorous ascetic movements and debates which characterised fourth-century Rome, and encountered for the first time male and female monastic houses organised following eastern models.[14]

In Thagaste he established a lay community of *servi dei*, or servants of God, spending his time in fasting, prayer, study and good works.[15] There he completed a number of works which are more distinctively Christian in their concern with exegesis of scripture, the Church, faith and the Incarnation, than those written at Cassiciacum.[16] Although he tells us that he was careful not to visit towns which needed a bishop, it was while visiting a possible recruit for the Thagaste community in Hippo, in 392, that he was laid hold of by the congregation and forcibly ordained priest in order to help their own ageing bishop, Valerius. Quickly realising the exceptional qualities of his priest, Valerius ensured he could not be snatched away by a neighbouring diocese, by (somewhat irregularly) ordaining him co-adjutor bishop, to succeed him on his death. Thus Augustine was to spend the rest of his life as priest and from 396, as bishop of Hippo.

He also continued to pursue a communal life, first in a lay monastery in the garden of the basilica, and then, as bishop, in a clerical monastery established in the bishop's house.[17] His *Rule* is explicitly modelled on the first Christian communities of Acts in its emphasis on the unity in charity of the common life of its members, with 'one heart and soul' directed towards God, putting the interests of the community before personal interest.[18] Its primary concern is not with asceticism, 'holiness' or

celibacy, but with the social, ethical aspects of life lived in common. The monastic vocation was the closest Augustine thought human beings might come, in this life, to overcoming the self-referential pride which had fractured society in the Fall, and of approximating to the social life of the saints – even though, in practice, the community fell far short of such ideals and inevitably shared the unavoidable ambiguity of Christian life in a fallen, vitiated world.

From the moment of his ordination, Augustine was never again free to pursue the life of a scholar. He was immediately obliged to preach, to address the assembled African bishops in council, to refute the Manichees, to battle against the Donatist schism which had torn the African Church apart, as well as attempting to pursue his own writing. The latter was to become increasingly circumstantial, responding to needs, questions, challenges and demands as they arose.

As bishop, these demands intensified, for not only was he expected to preach, celebrate and baptise (the first two often daily) but he also assumed the role of administrator and legal arbitrator which had fallen to the bishops following the conversion of Constantine. The Church was now a legally recognised institution able to receive gifts, donations and bequests. It was the bishop's duty to administer these goods, which often included land and estates, for the benefit of the Church and the needy to whom it had traditionally ministered. More importantly, the bishop could now arbitrate between any two parties who chose to consult him and who agreed to abide by his judgement. In an empire with no organised police force and no organised system of legal advice or representation, this episcopal jurisdiction was tremendously popular: it was free, quick and impartial. Augustine heard cases each weekday, from morning, frequently until late afternoon – tedious, petty cases of family quarrels and disputes over land, property, debts, children. He also found himself interceding for members of his congregation to higher officials – with little success, to his enormous frustration.

Scripture and preaching

Although Augustine would have preached almost every day – and therefore in all about 8,000 times – we possess only 546 extant sermons as well as the 124 *Tractates on John's Gospel*, the 10 *Homilies on the First Epistle of John* and a series of sermons on all 150 Psalms.[19] He was a very popular preacher, had an enthusiastic congregation at home and was often invited as a visiting preacher, especially at Carthage (see Figure 58.3). This was no doubt due to his simple, straightforward style, which, combined with his finely honed rhetorical skills and his training and experience as a teacher, enabled his congregation to build up a solid knowledge of scripture and to follow even the most difficult theological argument.

Augustine, however, as we have seen, regarded language as a result of the Fall: before the Fall human beings would have known and communicated intuitively, without the need for words. His awareness of the problems and techniques of teaching and communicating are cogently presented in *On Teaching the Uninstructed* and in a number of works on language and exegesis.[20] Most especially, he is clear that for teaching to be rightly communicated and understood it must be motivated by and received in love.[21] Thus, one of his favourite analogies for the role of the preacher is the descent of Christ to become incarnate in order to lead humanity back to Himself. Language, too, then, like the common life of the monastic community, when rooted in love, has a social function in enabling the Christian community to cohere, understand and live its faith. And for Augustine, the language of Christianity was its scriptures.

When he had first examined the Christian scriptures as a student of rhetoric, fired by Cicero's *Exhortation to Philosophy*, they had jarred with his cultured sensibilites. They appeared crude, badly written full of vulgarisms and solecisms, unworthy when compared with 'the dignity of Cicero' (*Confessions* 3.5.9). The early third-century Old Latin translation which Augustine no doubt consulted was indeed an extremely literal, rather poor translation, but scripture's defects were a notorious feature of pagan criticism of Christianity which any educated person, pagan or Christian, could not but be sensitive to. Augustine's attitude to them is therefore unavoidably ambiguous. To an extent, he was able to reconcile himself to them by finding features which could be accommodated to

Figure 58.3 Remains of the Church of St. Cyprian in Carthage where Augustine once preached. Photo J. C. N. Coulston

cultured, late antique taste: Ambrose had shown him that they were full of mysteries and could be interpreted allegorically in order to sound their spiritual depths; they could be analysed according to the rules of rhetoric and not found wanting (*De doctrina Christiana* 4).

Augustine was sensitive to questions of exegetical method. In some passages he outlines a fourfold sense (the historical, analogical, aetiological and allegorical), which necessitate a consideration of the author's intention, his culture and thought forms, his initial inspiration and also of the readers' possible interpretation and re-application of what he has said. He seems to allow for a multiplicity of meaning and interpretation on the part of author and reader, so long as neither contradicts the basic rule of love of God and neighbour. Similarly, he allows for discrepancies between the authors of scripture (for example, in *On the Harmony of the Gospels*) on the basis that what matters is not the details each remembers and has presented in his own fashion, but their shared intention, which is unified because of their common inspiration by the Holy Spirit. It is in this context that he explains and justifies his frequent use of allegory as an exegetical tool, especially in sermons: it allows him to investigate the spiritual sense of the literal text of scripture; to present its truth to his hearers at their various levels; to meet the criticisms of scripture's sensitive, erudite pagan critics; to deal with obviously symbolic, figurative or otherwise offensive or absurd passages; to delight the hearer and inspire him to seek for, and delight in finding, the truth.

Most important was what the scriptures had to teach: humility not pride; confession not presumption; grace not self-reliance. These lessons of the Incarnation to fallen human beings were as relevant to the cultured critic as to the self-sufficient philosopher, and it is the commandment of love of God and neighbour, and the doctrine of the Incarnation, which provide the rules and method for Augustine's interpretation, rather than those of classical grammar and rhetoric.

Nevertheless, Augustine, like most of the fathers, was a product of a classical education; he had been formed by it, and to a large extent, even as a Christian, it determined his mind-set. It could not simply be dispensed with. It is with the rather ambiguous, but often fruitful, relation between classical culture and Christianity that we find Augustine coming to terms in *On Christian Doctrine* (*De doctrina Christiana*), which is both a work on Christian exegesis and preaching, and

also a detailed examination of the place and use of secular culture. Of course, pagan religious practice – idolatry, sacrifice, the mysteries – was wholly rejected, but other aspects of pagan culture – the disciplines, philosophy, moral rules, monotheist affirmations and aspirations – had so much in common with Christianity that they were often thought to be derived from earlier teaching in Moses and the prophets. These were 'seeds of the Logos' and could be legitimately appropriated and used by Christians who, like the Israelites, spoiled the Egyptians of their treasure.[22] For Augustine, they are to be used insofar as they facilitate the interpretation and expression in preaching of the truth of scripture.

Christianity and paganism

Secular culture was an issue for Augustine and his contemporaries, not just at a cultural, literary level, but also, as our comments about the social function of scripture above might suggest, at a social level too. Although the empire became officially Christian in the course of the fourth century following Constantine's conversion, the society in which the Church found itself was still more than vestigially pagan. Indeed, some scholars suggest that the Church made very little impact indeed on the municipal life of the towns of the empire which remained, if not pagan, at least secular and 'unchristianised': it showed no interest in those institutions and offices of state which had traditionally been grounded in paganism; provided no alternatives to the pagan civic rites; did not erect Christian civic buildings or establish Christian schools.[23] But Augustine could not but be aware of the 'vestigial' paganism of his congregation. As his sermons witness, they still carried charms, wore amulets, consulted diviners, swore oaths, used the pagan religious calendar, observed the old funerary customs, and most especially, took part in the processions and attended the theatre, games, spectacles and shows which were still a central part of civic life. In a very real way, it was the duty of the bishop to define just what being a Christian meant in this shadowy and confusing overlap of sacred and secular in the lives of his congregation.[24] Indeed, Augustine and his fellow bishops were forced into making very clear-cut distinctions when imperial policy turned from toleration to the proscription of paganism under Theodosius.

The unattainability of perfection

Augustine's understanding of the Fall, of original sin, and of the operation of divine grace meant that any school or doctrine which claimed to be able to attain perfection in this life was, in his eyes, fundamentally unsound and contradictory to Christian doctrine and experience. In the course of his episcopate he encountered three such schools of thought which each, in different ways, challenged his understanding of the Christian life and forced him to defend and elaborate the basic principles of his faith. The first, which proclaimed itself to be the true, holy and untainted Catholic Church in Africa was the Donatist schism. The second, which upheld the individual's freedom to will to do the good unhindered by original sin was represented by the school of Pelagius. The third was the classical idea of a wholly just and peaceful society realisable in this life.

Donatism

The Donatist Church (so called after its main founder, Donatus, bishop of Carthage [313–355]) was a schism within the African Church which arose during the 'Great Persecution' of 303–305 among those who had taken a rigorous, separatist, uncompromising stance towards other Catholics, who, for whatever reason or by whatever means, seemed to have compromised with the Roman authorities, by, for example, handing over the sacred scriptures (see Chapter 44 in this volume). The rigorists refused to accept as bishop of Carthage someone whom they regarded as tainted by the sin of such compromise.[25] Thus two churches were formed, and over the years, despite fierce imperial

opposition, the Donatist faction became deeply established in African tradition and custom, so much so that by Augustine's day it was larger than the Catholic Church and for many had become very much the Catholic Church in Africa.

The Donatists represented an attempt to preserve the true identity of the African Church – the church of the martyrs, of Cyprian and Tertullian – and also a movement of opposition to the world which they regarded as hostile and demonic. They were prepared to defend their faith to the death, to preserve the church without spot or wrinkle. In their opposition to the state, the Donatist schismatics seem to have attracted the support of its other disaffected critics, who, whether for economic, political or strategic reasons, wished to defy imperial policy. Some scholars have identified the origins of the Donatist schism in these varied non-religious grievances, but even their most extreme wing, the violent, criminal gangs of martyr-seeking Circumcellions, were primarily religious in their self-understanding.

The schism was one Augustine had to counter from the moment of his ordination. He did so in a characteristically thorough and dedicated manner, even though it necessarily distracted him from more congenial, and often more pressing, concerns. He meticulously and painstakingly established the history and facts of the schism for himself, compiling huge dossiers of evidence with which he corrected Optatus' earlier version of the schism; ensured that his own clergy were beyond reproach by taking energetic measures to enforce clerical discipline; preached innumerable sermons; attempted to organise public debates; composed numerous treatises and letters to Donatist leaders and bishops.[26] However, his efforts would probably have been in vain without the aid of imperial legislation.

In 405 the emperor Honorius issued an Edict of Unity which for the first time branded the Donatists not only as schismatics but as heretics, and therefore subject to strict and punitive laws The final, official blow to a weakened Donatist Church came in 411, following the momentous Conference of Carthage, when Donatist and Catholic bishops from throughout Africa faced each other under the presidency of the imperial representative, Marcellinus. In 412 the Edict of Unity was renewed and Donatism became a criminal offence, with a scale of fines according to rank. Clergy were exiled, property was to be surrendered. Although the Donatists did not give in, they were inevitably weakened, and their future restricted.

The controversy raised a number of practical, as well as theological issues for Augustine, which were to shape his understanding of the nature of the church and its sacraments, as well as its relation to the state.

His attitude to the persecution and coercion of heretics was at first an ambiguous one, but faced with the violence of the Circumcellions, who were not above theft, arson, assault or murder, and the Donatists' deep-rooted, defiant hostility which his own efforts had done little to counter, he seems to have become increasingly supportive of state intervention. He buttressed his acceptance with arguments for the necessity of loving discipline, correction and punishment in order to persuade the sinner of his fault, convert him to the truth, and perhaps, eventually, even change his inner attitude and bring about a genuine conversion. However, he unfailingly intervened to moderate what he regarded as excessive punishment and to avert the death penalty.

The Donatists regarded themselves as the true Catholic Church in Africa, which had stood firm during the persecutions and which was untainted by the sins of apostasy or compromise with the state authorities. They had preserved the Church as a pure and holy congregation of the saints. Augustine ridicules their position: is anyone without sin? Who are they to judge the whole of the rest of the Church throughout the world, which is largely unaware of them, and to condemn it? Do they not also suffer internal schisms and sinful behaviour? Have they not appealed to the authorities when it suited them? Obviously his theology of the Fall, original sin, the operation of divine grace and election led him to cut incisively through the Donatists' all too circumstantial and convenient arguments to demonstrate that the most heinous sin is not that of compromise, but of schism, whereby they had cut themselves off from the unity of charity in the universally recognised Catholic Church; that all human beings are unavoidably sinful; that the Church necessarily comprehends

righteous and unrighteous and will remain a mixture of wheat and tares until the Last Judgement; that no one merits salvation; that the only source of holiness and purity within the Church is Christ in His Holy Spirit.

The last point was the crux of Augustine's argument against the Donatists' insistence that the priestly orders of the clergy of the Catholic Church were invalidated and rendered ineffective by sin and that therefore the sacraments they administered were likewise tainted, invalid and ineffective. The one source of sanctification, holiness, purity and sacramental effectiveness, Augustine argued, was Christ, through his Holy Spirit, irrespective of the moral character of the minister; the sacraments are 'holy in themselves' (*On Baptism* 4.18). Furthermore, the sacraments were valid, wherever they were administered, if they were performed in the name of Christ who instituted them, following the correct form of words. There was therefore no need for rebaptism, as the Donatists argued: even Donatist baptism, in these terms, was valid. But to be effective for salvation, however, the baptised needed to be reconciled to the unity of the Catholic Church, as it was only here that the Spirit can be given and received. The Donatists' separation from the Church is a sign of their lack of charity, the absence of the Holy Spirit, and without this, like a tree without roots, everything they did would be fruitless.

Pelagianism

The movement which has become known as 'Pelagianism' does not just refer to the thought of Pelagius, but to a number of authors, throughout the empire, from Britian to Sicily, Spain to the Holy Land, whose thought varied according to their specific contexts and concerns, but who together possess a certain homogeneity, either through their acquaintance with Pelagius, or because of the basic perfectionist thrust of their ideas.[27]

Pelagius (350–425) himself was a British monk who first lived in Bethlehem and then in Rome, whose teaching proved especially popular with a group of influential, extremely conservative, Roman aristocrats, because of its asceticism and call for perfection through a strict moral code. Its uncompromisingly high standards allowed them to set themselves apart from 'institutional' Christianity and become true Christians, *integri Christiani* (Augustine's insistence upon celibacy in embracing Christianity can, strangely, be placed in the same context).

Pelagius and his followers stood in a tradition firmly rooted in classical moral reflection, which insisted upon individual self determination, moral responsibility, autonomy of will and the realisation of perfection through knowledge. Apart from a commentary on Romans, Pelagius' work consists largely of letters of ascetic advice and moral exhortation to converts, penitents, virgins, celibates and widows. Advising Demetrias, the daughter of an eminent noble family who wanted to pursue a vocation of virginity, he was emphatic that the choice of good or evil is 'voluntary and independent, not bound by necessity' (*To Demetrias* 3.2); that human beings possesses natural goodness, reason and wisdom, an inner law, which enables them to recognise and serve God. Although sin might obscure this natural state, he urged that it is not a fault in our nature but our will, and that our original state can be restored by the remission of sin and Christ's new law appropriated in baptism. It is baptism, above all else, which marks the decisive break with our past life for it remits our sins and allows the new law to operate, restoring our original, natural state of knowledge and freedom.

Pelagius had encountered criticism and hostility well before his encounter with Augustine and had already engaged in fierce controversy with Jerome. His arrival in North Africa as an exile, following the fall of Rome in 410, brought him into a context where his teaching, and that of his followers, almost immediately faced censure. Foremost among the latter was Caelestius who remained in Carthage while Pelagius went on to Palestine. His open denial of Adam's original sin, its transmission to his descendants, of the necessity of infant baptism and his conviction that it was possible for human beings to be sinless, led to his condemnation and excommunication. The issues were brought to Augustine's notice by letter and from then on, in a number of early treatises and letters we find Augustine rebutting Pelagianist ideas.[28]

But it was only in 415 that he began to attack Pelagius himself in *On Nature and Grace*. From that moment on Pelagian teaching was condemned by councils, imperial rescripts and church canons and its proponents relentlessly pursued. As a result 'Pelagianism' was definitively identified and its details defined. It was a heresy which Augustine used all his powers to counter in numerous treatises, in particular against the southern Italian bishop, Julian of Eclanum, on the subjects of original sin, infant baptism, grace, free will, marriage and concupiscence, until the end of his life.[29]

To Augustine the effects of Adam's Fall and the inheritance of his sin (original sin) were abundantly clear in our vitiated will, our inability to will or to do the good, and in the lust (concupiscence) which overcomes our reason. He therefore argued for the necessity of baptism, even for new-born infants, in order to remit the guilt of original sin. Even so, he was aware that the effects of original sin remained after baptism: no one can do anything of themselves but sin; in order to do the good they stand in continual need of God's grace. Whereas for Pelagius grace was found in the power which enables human beings freely to will and to act, in their created nature and in the 'new law' introduced by Christ's teaching and example which restored that nature, for Augustine the law was of no avail without the aid of God's Spirit. Without the life-giving Spirit the law is the 'letter that kills'. It is not enough for human beings to obey simply through fear of punishment or hope of reward, they must be moved to desire, love and delight in it – and this is the work of grace.

Reflections such as these made it difficult for Augustine to speak meaningfully of freedom in relation to the will. In some contexts he speaks of God as helper, as preparing the will, of human beings co-operating with God and resists the idea of compulsion in the operation of the will under grace. Many passages do, however, seem to suggest that divine election is irresistible. The reader needs to be aware that Augustine has in mind not the power of grace to coerce, override or control the will but rather its ability to unfailingly call forth a response which corresponds with humanity's true identity as creatures of God, a response of freely willed subjection, delight, desire for and love of God's revelation. This is effected by God making what is good at the same time attractive, pleasing and delightful to human beings: 'the good begins to be desired when it begins to be sweet . . . therefore the blessing of sweetness is the grace of God, whereby we are made to delight in and to desire, that is, to love, what he commands us' (*Against the Letters of Pelagius* 2.21). God does not thereby deny human beings their freedom but enables them to attain it.

The fact that some are not saved, however, raised and continues to raise, intractable problems for Augustine's theory of grace. Why do some believe, while others do not? For Augustine, this is a matter of God's election, not human merit. But if so, why does he choose some but not others? What occupied Augustine, however, was not so much why some are left to damnation but rather why, when all human beings justly deserve damnation, God has shown mercy by electing some to be saved. His doctrine of original sin, divine election, foreknowledge and predestination was unable to answer why some were not saved, but was nevertheless able to demonstrate that the fact that they were not was wholly just. To the monks of Hadrumetum[30] in North Africa and those in Marseilles[31] in southern Gaul, for whom this theology seemed to undermine their *raison d'ētre* and to leave no room for human responsibility or initiative, he argues forcibly that both the beginning of faith (which the monks at Marseilles wished to attribute to our free choice) and the perseverance to continue in faith, are wholly the work of grace.

The two cities[32]

When Rome fell to Alaric and his Gothic troops in 410, the future of a number of long-held ideals was also threatened. Since Constantine's conversion in 312 there had been a strong current of Christian thought, beginning with Eusebius of Caesarea, which regarded the empire as God's chosen vehicle to establish the Christian Church throughout the earth, and the emperor as an almost messianic figure, providentially appointed to deliver the empire from the forces of paganism and to ensure its salvation in the Christian Church. This 'imperial theology' suffered a tremendous blow when

Rome, the heart of the empire, fell to barbarian forces. The pagans, of course, as they had always done in times of crisis, blamed the catastrophe on the Christians' neglect of the gods, who could now be seen wreaking their revenge.

Augustine responded to the pagans' charges by addressing them – or at least, the cultured, aristocratic, intellectuals who voiced these charges – in the first half of his *City of God*. Arguing from the same pagan classics as his opponents, he demonstrated that Rome had suffered similar crises well before the advent of Christianity and that this was not the judgement of the gods who were mere jumped-up mortals, but the judgement of divine providence on their vicious subjection of others, not for the sake of peace or justice, but for personal glory and the desire to dominate. As Cicero had made clear, the Romans had long ago ceased to be a commonwealth in any real sense, because they failed to give to everyone their due.

Although Augustine's earliest work shows some leaning towards an 'imperial theology', it is obvious that after 410 he decisively broke with any conception of living in 'Christian times'. Rather, as Robert Markus has demonstrated, he seems to regard the empire as 'theologically neutral', as having no role to play in the work of divine providence, for good or evil, but merely as part of the temporal, as it were, secular, context (*saeculum*), in which Christians and pagans alike lead their lives in the world.[33] Instead, he increasingly drew upon Tyconius' earlier Christian tradition, especially early Jewish-Christian works, scripture and themes first sketched within his own earlier works, to develop the idea of two cities – the city of God and the city of the world. He understood these cities to be societies made up of individuals united by a common goal or aim. The city of God included all those predestined by God for salvation, whose goal was not earthly goods or glory, but obedience to, and love of, God and the common good. The city of this world, on the other hand, comprehends all those who have turned away from God to temporal goods, who seek their own selfish ends and who are therefore destined for damnation.

In developing the theme of the two cities, one of Augustine's main preoccupations is polemical: to refute those philosophers and those Christian idealists who thought that humankind's ultimate good, the happy life, the ideal city, true justice and peace could be attained in this life.[34] He regards such thought as 'amazing folly' which, given the wretched necessities of life in society, everyone, without exception, encounters and suffers at every level of human existence: in the family, the city, the world; they exist even among the angels. Experience underlines the fundamentally flawed and vitiated nature of the human will, the essentially selfish, self-seeking nature of human society, the impossibility of ever attaining peace or realising true justice. All of this, for Augustine, is a sign of our fallenness; of the outworkings of original sin.

In this life, therefore, where true peace and justice are unattainable, the two cities are inextricably interwoven; their members share the same society, the same city, the same occupations and laws, and in some cases, the same family and worship. Because the city of God can only be fully realised in the life to come, its divinely elected and predestined citizens are separated from the city of the world only in will and their desire for their ultimate goal. In this world they are pilgrims, resident aliens, using and abiding by the powers, institutions and laws that be. They take part in government, the administration of the law and military service, in order to maintain whatever degree of peace and justice is possible after the Fall, aware that its effects need to be delimited and controlled.

Even the Church cannot be identified with the city of God. Although he believed that membership of it, through baptism, was necessary to belong to the city of God, Augustine was well aware, as he made clear during the Donatist controversy, that it in fact contained wheat and tares, righteous and unrighteous, the predestined elect and the damned, and that they will only finally be separated in the life to come.

The last four books of *City of God* deal with the consummation and fulfilment of history in eternity, in the Last Judgement, Heaven and Hell. Asserting the original and eternal unity of the body and soul, Augustine takes a distinctly anti-Platonic stand in defending and discussing the problems which arise from a doctrine of the resurrection of the body. In heaven there will no longer be any

need for communication by language and signs, there will be no time or mutability, no need for faith and hope, no need to 'use' and refer things to God, rather there will be eternal contemplation, love and possession of God Himself, giving rise to eternal praise. Whereas now we can only see 'through a glass darkly', there we shall see 'face to face'.

Doctrine

Faith and reason

The crucial role which philosophy, and especially Neoplatonism, played in Augustine's conversion means that his early reflection on the Christian faith takes place very much within a rational, philosophically inspired context, in which the emphasis was placed upon the attainment of truth through the exercise of the mind in the liberal disciplines. These intellectual arts, he thought, enabled human beings to extricate themselves from the temporal, mutable and deceptive reality experienced by the senses and to attain the eternal, immutable truth which can only be grasped by their highest, spiritual part: their mind, soul or intellect.

Augustine, was, however, moved to fundamentally revise and temper his early confidence in reason in a number of decisive ways. First of all, his polemic against the Manichees, which became more urgent when he returned to Africa, led him to emphasise and defend the important role of faith in apprehending the truth, as opposed to their claim to be able to explain everything by reason.[35] Second, his attempts to communicate the Christian faith to his largely illiterate, uneducated congregation could not but make him acutely conscious of the incongruence between traditional, philosophically based classical culture and their simple devotion and insight into the faith. His attempts to adapt his teaching to their various levels led to a deeper appreciation of the necessity and usefulness of faith. While faith and reason are complementary, and reason enables us to decide between authorities, we must believe in order to understand.

It was his developed doctrine of the Fall, however, with its conviction that the truth is inaccessible to our darkened minds, and unattainable by our vitiated wills, which confirmed for Augustine the indispensability of faith in God's temporal revelation of Himself to fallen human beings within the very temporal, mutable realm in which their fragmented selves has become imprisoned. It is in this context that Augustine's mature understanding of the scriptures and his doctrines of creation, salvation history and most especially, of the Incarnation, are fully worked out.

Incarnation

Augustine did not write a work specifically on the Incarnation, rather his reflections on God becoming man are found in a number of different contexts.[36] Most of these are pastoral, where he is primarily concerned to make clear the exemplary, healing, paedagogic, salvific and sacramental role of the Incarnation. In other contexts, Augustine's intention is obviously polemical, and he expounds orthodox doctrine against Docetists, Apollinarians, Arians, Photinians and Sabellians. He also often seems to expound Christological doctrine with the philosophers in mind. This was not least because, although he was prepared to concede (following Rom. 1:19–20) that some philosphers had been able, through reason, to see the truth, he is convinced that they cannot understand or attain it, because the only way to truth is a confession of humble faith which follows the way which is Christ; the proud presumption of the philosophers who think they can grasp the truth through their own powers is merely a symptom of their failure to do so.

Although he was largely ignorant of Eastern Christological debates and terminology, Augustine does attempt to emphasise the unity of the Word, soul and body, of Godhead and manhood in Christ, partly in order to oppose the philosophers' denigration of the flesh and partly to counter their repugnance at the idea of the resurrection of the body. Perhaps most importantly, however,

the unity of Godhead and manhood in Christ forms the basis for Augustine's emphasis upon Christ as the One Mediator between God and human beings, who was able to effect what the demonic mediators of pagan theurgy could never achieve. As God and man, as both the wisdom (*sapientia*) and the knowledge (*scientia*) of God, he is uniquely able to lead human beings from the temporal realm (of *scientia*) into which they have fallen, back to the realm (of *sapientia*) from which they have fallen. In this sense, Christianity offers the 'Universal Way' to salvation, which the philosophers had sought but never found (*City of God* 10.32).

The Trinity

Aware that there was very little reflection on the Trinity within the Latin tradition and that much Greek thought was inaccessible to Latin speakers, Augustine worked on his fifteen-book *On the Trinity* over a period of twenty years (399–419). Although polemical considerations do not predominate, he was aware of the threat which Arianism and Sabellianism, in particular, posed to Trinitarian doctrine, and at various points seeks to refute them. His main concern, however, seems to have been to define and illustrate the traditional, orthodox doctrine of the identity of substance within the Trinity and the inseparable operation of its persons. He establishes the basis for this doctrine, and therefore its authority, in the scriptural account of the Incarnation of the Son and the revelation of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.[37]

In examining the traditional, philosophical terminology which had been used to articulate the doctrine of the Trinity, he is aware that the simple transposition of Greek terms, such as *ousia* and *hypostaseis*, into Latin, would be misleading and confusing, since they could only be translated as one essence and three substances. Although he himself preferred the term essence or nature to refer to the One Trinity, he acknowledges the traditional use of 'substance', and therefore endorses the traditional Latin terminology of one substance and (in order not to remain silent, though aware of the inadequacies of language) three persons. He stresses, however, that despite the language of three persons, the only way in which we can meaningfully talk of distinction within the Trinity is in terms of relation: of the unbegotten Father, the begotten Son and the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son. In every other respect, in mind, will, substance and attributes, they are identical. In describing the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, Augustine's intention was not polemical. He was simply drawing upon Latin precedents and was unaware of the Greek creed of Constantinople (381) which stated that the Spirit proceeded from the Father.

In Books 8–15, Augustine proceeds to examine various similitudes to illustrate the inseparable operation and identical nature of the three persons of the Trinity. In a rather original way, he derives his similitudes from the image of God in human beings, assuming, on the basis of Gen. 1:26 ('Let us make man in our image and our likeness'), that it is a Trinitarian image. In our capacity for self-awareness, reason and love (which he at one point defines as memory, understanding and love), he locates that which sets us apart from the rest of creation and enables us to come closest to our Creator. Most especially, in our awareness, knowledge and love of the Trinity as revealed in the incarnate Christ, he finds the means whereby the deformed, fragmented, fallen image of God in us might be reformed and ultimately come to full knowledge and love of the Trinity.

It is clear, however, that the reformation of the image of God in human beings will never be fulfilled in this life: it is a gradual, progressive process of faith, hope and love, whereby the operation of God's grace and the revelation of His love in the incarnate Christ enables our response, to bring us to ultimate perfection in the life to come.

Conclusion

Augustine remained bishop of Hippo until his death in 430 CE. As he recited the penitential psalms on his death bed and wept for his sins, Hippo was being besieged by the Vandals, Alans and Goths

under their leader Geiseric. They finally took the town, and, after an orgy of looting, pillage, murder, rape and torture, evacuated it and burnt it to the ground in 431. A whole world came to an end with Augustine's passing.

What survived, quite extraordinarily, was Augustine's library in the *secretarium* of the basilica at Hippo, which contained among other things, the vast body of his own works, which he had spent the last years of his life carefully annotating, correcting and commenting upon in his *Retractations*. Through these, he continues to give us one of our closest insights into the history and theology of the West in late Antiquity.

Notes

1 The most accessible general books on Augustine in English are Bonner 1963 (rev. 2009) and 1987; Brown 1967 (rev. with Epilogue 2000); Chadwick 2010; Harrison 2000; Hollingworth 2013; Lancel 2002; Lane Fox 2016; Levering 2013; Rist 1994; Williams 2016; Madec 1994, in French, should not, however, be missed. There is a bibliographical search tool for Augustine bibliography at www.findingaugustine.org. For an Encyclopedia see Fitzgerald 1999; for collections of essays see Lawless and Dodaro 2000; Meconi 2014; Vessey 2012; for a very useful selection of texts see Harmless 2010.
2 See Brown 1992; Kaster 1988.
3 Burton 2005; Clark 1993; Conybeare 2016; Kenny 2005; O'Donnell 1992.
4 On Manichaeism, see BeDuhn 2010; Lieu 1985: 117–53; Bonner 1963: 157–236.
5 See Madec 1996; O'Donnell 1992 II: 421–4.
6 I.e. theurgy. Augustine has Porphyry, in particular, in mind. Cf. *City of God* 10.
7 See Frederiksen 1986; Martin 2001.
8 Couenhoven 2013.
9 Kirwan 1989: 131–2.
10 Augustine is a rare exception to the fathers' general teaching that sexual intercourse is a result of the Fall. See *Literal Commentary on Genesis* 9.3.6. Hunter 1994.
11 *City of God* 14; *Literal Commentary on Genesis* 11.
12 1 John 2.16.
13 Lawless 1987: 36.
14 See *On the Morals of the Catholic Church and the Manichees*.
15 *Vita* 3.
16 *The Teacher*; *83 Diverse Questions*; *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*; *On True Religion*; *On Genesis against the Manichees*.
17 He probably didn't know of Eusebius of Vercelli's (363) similar arrangement in Northern Italy.
18 The male version of the Rule (*Praeceptum*) was written *c.* 395/6 and was probably soon after re-edited in a form for nuns (*Regularis informatio*) in the convent where Augustine's own sister was superior (Verheijen 1967).
19 On Augustine's preaching, see Harmless 1995; Harrison 2012; Houghton Kolbet 2010; Van der Meer 1962.
20 *On Dialectic*; *The Teacher*; *On Christian Doctrine*.
21 *On Christian Doctrine*, *prologue* 6; *On Teaching the Uninstructed* 10.15. On teaching, see Arnold and Bright (eds) 1995. On language, see Morgan 2011. On exegesis, Schnaubelt and Van Fleteren 2001.
22 *De Doctrina Christiana* 2.40.60; Harrison 2000, chapter 2.
23 Lepelley 1975.
24 Brown 1995; Markus 1990.
25 On Donatism, see Brown 1972: 237–59, 279–300; Crespin 1965; Frend 1952; Monceaux 1922 IV and VII; Tengström 1964; Tilly 1997; Ployd 2015.
26 Including *Psalm against the Donatists*; *Against Cresconius*; *Against the letter of Parmenianus*; *Against the Writings of Petilianus*; *On Baptism against the Donatists*; *Against Gaudentius*.
27 On Pelagianism, see Bonner 1987, 2007; Brown 1972; De Bruyn 1998; Evans 1968; Lohr 2015; Rees 1991.
28 *On the Consequences of Sins and their Forgiveness*; *On the Spirit and the Letter*; *Epistle* 157.
29 *Against the Letters of Pelagius*; *On Marriage and Concupiscence*; *Against Julian*; *Unfinished Refutation of Julian's Second Response*.
30 *On Grace and Free Will*; *On Correction and Grace*.
31 *On the Predestination of the Saints*; *On the Gift of Perseverance*.
32 On the *City of God* and Augustine's social and political thought, see Markus 1970; O'Daly 2004; Ruokanen 1993; Van Oort 1991; Wetzel 2014.
33 Markus 1970: 42–51.

34 See especially Book 19.
35 For example, in *On True Religion* and *On the Usefulness of Belief*.
36 For secondary literature, see Van Bavel 1954; Dodaro 2008; Rémy 1979; Verwilghen 1985; Madec 1989.
37 For secondary literature, see Ayres 2010; Boersma 2016; Gioia 2008; Hochschild 2012; Schindler 1965.

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EPHREM THE SYRIAN

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Ephrem: life, character and importance

Ephrem the Syrian, the foremost writer in the Syriac tradition of Christianity, was born in the early fourth century CE in Nisibis, an ancient city of enduring commercial, political, and military significance,[1] which is now Nusaybin in Turkey. After a century of struggle between the Roman and Persian empires, Syro-Mesopotamia had been restored to Roman control by a treaty of 298 CE, which specified Nisibis as the only place for commercial exchange between the two empires.[2] Its population and hence its cultural environment were constituted by a mix of many diverse peoples: Arameans, Arabs, Parthians, Iranians, Greeks, Jews, and Romans. He came from a Christian family, as he himself affirms in a well-known if somewhat puzzling passage in his *Hymns against Heresies* 26.10:

> In the way of truth was I born
> even though I as a child did not yet perceive it.
> Examining, I acquired it for myself, as I perceived it.
> My faith despised the confusing paths that came toward me.[3]

There are many possible interpretations of 'the confusing paths' among which the young Ephrem found himself. There had been Christians in the environs of Nisibis since at least the late second century as the epitaph of Bishop Aberkios of Hierapolis attests.[4] Yet the size, beliefs, and history of the community are elusive; sources are scarce and difficult to place chronologically, geographically, and theologically. A few relative certainties can be affirmed: by *c.* 300 CE Syriac-speaking Christians used the *Peshitta* translation of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament in the Old Syriac version as well as Tatian's *Diatessaron*. They were also familiar with writings connected with the apostle Thomas (e.g., the Acts of Thomas and possibly the Gospel of Thomas) and with the *Odes of Solomon*. These and a handful of sources that purport to tell the early history of Syriac Christianity (namely, the *Chronicle of Edessa*, the *Teaching of Addai*, and the *Chronicle of Arbela*) present numerous challenges to the historian.

Like their co-religionists everywhere before the fourth century CE, the Christians of Syro-Mesopotamia were diverse in their beliefs and practices. Bardaisan, Marcion, and Mani were well-known religious figures here, as was, probably, Aphrahat, Ephrem's older contemporary. The pairing of Semitic language with ascetic tendencies led earlier scholars to ponder whether to

categorize the first Syro-Mesopotamian Christians as 'Gnostic' or 'Jewish-Christian' encratites with ties to Qumran.[5] The dismantling of these two scholarly categories coincided with the recognition that emerging Jewish and Christian communities in Mesopotamia linked sexuality with holiness in ways that were, in some respects, similar and, in other respects, distinct from one another.[6] The Qumran texts continue to provide intriguing parallels to Syriac Christian literature and liturgical practice more broadly as well as specifically to Ephrem.[7] Yet radical rethinking of the study of Judaism as well as of early Christianity has made scholars more hesitant to link the earliest Syriac Christians with a single thread in either of these complex and evolving religious communities.[8] All aspects of the Greco-Roman, Persian, and Judaic worlds are now seen as areas of lively interaction for Syriac-speaking Christians, many of whom were probably bi-lingual or multi-lingual in some degree.[9] In the case of a poet-theologian-controversialist like Ephrem, the question now is how he takes up broadly used themes and images and shapes them to his purpose.[10]

Soon after Nisibis and its environs were reincorporated into the Roman empire under Diocletian, Constantine became sole ruler and converted to Christianity. The Council of Nicea, convened in 325 by the emperor, posed new questions about authoritative belief among Christians as well as about the relationship between Christian and imperial authorities. Jacob, bishop of Nisibis, attended the Council of Nicea, and upon his return, he appointed Ephrem as 'interpreter' or 'exegete.' Although this is not a title or office known elsewhere, it apparently entailed the composition of hymns, homilies, and commentaries.[11] Through his writings, Ephrem pressed his vision of a unified and pro-Nicene church allied with Roman Christian power with the endorsement of a succession of orthodox bishops.[12] Material remains attest the alliance of the fourth-century Nisibene bishops with imperial might: large stone blocks trace the foundation of a massive basilica, probably built by Jacob; a few paces southeast stand the remains of the large baptistery completed by Bishop Vologeses in 359/60 (see Figure 59.1).[13]

As Rome and Persia continued the struggle for domination of Mesopotamia, Ephrem's homeland became a battleground, and he became an avid chronicler of the religious and political dimensions of the war. Here, too, his allegiance was clearly to Rome, as the divinely ordained Christian power. He was an eyewitness to the Roman military procession into Nisibis in 363 CE with the corpse of the defeated emperor Julian 'the Apostate.' He mourned, not the faithless emperor, but the tribulations of

Figure 59.1 Excavations at Nisibis showing the so-called 'Church of Mar Jacob.'[14] Photograph by Gareth Hughes, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mar_Jacob_Church,_Nisibis.jpg

the Nisibene Christians, who were forced to abandon their native city and to move westward in order to remain within the Roman empire. He, too, went to Edessa, where he continued to write and where he is said to have established a school of biblical and theological studies and women's choirs to sing his hymns. Ordained to the diaconate there, he died while ministering to victims of famine in 373 CE.[15]

Ephrem was, then, a man deeply engaged in the conflicts of his time and clear in his allegiances, yet, especially in his hymnody, he shows openness to the beauty of other religious expressions. For example, despite his fierce commitment to orthodoxy, Ephrem appreciated the appeal of the ante-Nicene Syriac Christian literature. Thus he not only wrote commentaries on the canonical scripture but he also wrote notes or lectured on Tatian's *Diatessaron*; in the hands of his disciples this became a commentary.[16] He utilized graphic feminine imagery for God, as some of the *Odes of Solomon* had done.[17] In his *Hymns on the Pearl* he explored the image of salvation as a precious pearl, an image that has roots not only in the New Testament but also in the Hymn of the Pearl in the Acts of Thomas.[18] Yet his *Hymns against Heresies* are harshly polemical, attacking Mani, Marcion, Bardaisan, and the astrologers.[19]

Similarly, Ephrem appears to be well acquainted with Jewish exegetical traditions, but these may be juxtaposed with various Christian modes of scriptural study as well as anti-Judaic polemics. The *Hymns on Paradise* and his *Commentary on Genesis and Exodus* are permeated with non-canonical Jewish traditions; yet the commentary also addresses questions common among Greek and Latin Christian exegetes.[20] His *Carmina Nisibena* and *Hymns against Julian* represent Christian appropriations of the prophetic tradition of the Hebrew Bible.[21] Yet in many of his compositions each positive theological statement seems to evoke propositions for refutation. The unseen opponent may be Jewish as often as pagan or heretical; generally, their identities are masked with epithets (for example, 'scrutinizers' for Arians, 'slanderers' or 'crucifiers' for Jews). As he expounds his Trinitarian doctrine in the *Sermons on*

Figure 59.2 St. Ephrem, as portrayed in a twelfth-century manuscript belonging to the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II (Dam. Pat. 12/15. Folio 5b). Photo Kathleen McVey

Faith and the *Hymns on Faith*, he argues against Judaizing Christians as well as against Arians.[22] In his *Paschal Hymns* he elaborates a theology of redemption in the midst of polemics against Jewish ritual.[23] The rich incarnational theology of his *Nativity Hymns* is co-mingled with arguments in defense of Mary's virginity over against the 'slanderers'—possibly Jewish critics—who would deny it.[24]

In the complex and uncertain world of fourth-century Mesopotamia, Ephrem's emphatic belligerence is comprehensible. In the Greco-Roman context, moreover, where virtuoso displays of rhetoric in what was a highly competitive culture (see Chapter 1 of this work) were highly prized, his compositions were stunningly successful. His ability to couch his polemics in richly symbolic verse and to set them to familiar melodies made his efforts all the more memorable and thus more effective. Having seen the damage done over the centuries by hostile inter-religious rhetoric, so easily translated into violent acts, most Christians today rightly hesitate to wield the rhetorical rapier against the adherents of religious beliefs different from their own as Late Antique Christians did. Clearly a passionate man, deeply persuaded that God's love and redemption are present and on display for all who open their eyes and ears, Ephrem had little patience for those who saw things differently. It is a challenge for his present readers to disentangle the beauty of his symbolic theology from his recurrent polemics. The recent emphasis in historical scholarship on identity formation has provided one solution to this quandary by using Ephrem's words to explore his notions of the limits of the Christian community and his self-understanding as a poet rather than to discern the putative views of his contemporaneous religious competitors.[25]

Ephrem's importance for the history of Syriac literature and for the history of Christianity in the Syriac-speaking context is substantial.[26] His hymns, collected in fifth- and sixth-century manuscripts, attest his early popularity and the ongoing influence of both his theological views and his use of hymnody to instill those views in church members. His fame is attested among Greek and Latin writers as well: Jerome (*de viris illustribus* 115), Epiphanius (*Panarion* 52.22.7), Palladius (*Historia Lausiaca* 40), Sozomen (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.16), and Theodoret (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.26). He played a role in the emergence of dramatic dialogues in Syriac as well as the dramatic *kontakia* of Romanos the Melode.[27] Sizeable corpora of writings in Greek, Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian, Georgian, Arabic, Latin, and Slavonic are also attributed to him.[28] As might be expected, his success is the scholar's bane since his works underwent continual updating to address the theological issues of the subsequent centuries; identifying Ephrem's authentic compositions among the interpolated or truncated versions of his followers can be challenging.[29] Today, as in the past, the Syriac poet-theologian is appreciated for his sophisticated awareness of the presence of God in the world.

Ephrem's theology of the presence of God in the world

Ephrem's world is permeated by the divine presence. His poetry is based upon a vision of the created order as a vast system of symbols or mysteries.[30] No person, thing, or event in the world exists without a mysterious relation to the whole. History and nature constitute the warp and woof of reality. To divorce an individual person, event, or thing from its context in either direction would destroy the handiwork of God in time and space. Each moment of life is governed by the Lord of Life and is an opportunity to see oneself and the community in relation to that Lord. So not only the events described in scripture, but all historical events must have profound religious significance.

Nature, too, is replete with intimations of the presence of God. In creating the world, God deliberately presented us not only with examples of beauty and order but also with symbols that allude more richly to the identity of their Creator:

> In every place, if you look, His symbol is there,
> and when you read, you will find His prototypes.
> For by Him were created all creatures,
> and he imprinted His symbols upon His possessions.

When He created the world,
He gazed at it and adorned it with His images.
Streams of His symbols opened, flowed and poured forth
His symbols on its members.

(Hymns on Virginity *20.12)*

At the center of all is Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, who is at once the apex of history and the metaphysical Mediator between the ineffable Creator and the creation. Ephrem sets forth this notion most succinctly in the *Hymns on Virginity* 28–30, where he speaks of the three harps of God:

The Word of the Most High came down and put on
a weak body with hands,
and He took two harps [Old and New Testaments]
in His right and left hands.
The third [Nature] He set before Himself
to be a witness to the [other] two,
for the middle harp taught
that their Lord is playing them.

(Hymns on Virginity *29.1)*

This strophe shows clearly not only that scripture and nature play complementary roles in Ephrem's theology but also that the lynchpin of his theological system is the Incarnate Word of God, through whom God has revealed the relation of the two Testaments to one another and to nature.

In examining his theology of divine presence, we will begin with his understanding of the Incarnation and proceed to the closely related notions of spiritual progress and sanctification or theosis/divinization. Next we will turn to God's presence in history, first considering scripture as the record of salvation history, especially as understood through typological exegesis, and then addressing the sacred dimension of the rest of history, specifically the events which Ephrem himself witnessed and contemplated. Finally, we will consider nature as God's domain, first in human beings created in the divine image, then in the sacraments and finally in the rest of the creation.

The Incarnation: lynchpin of Ephrem's theology

A central theme of Ephrem's *Hymns on the Nativity* is the wonder of the Incarnation, conceived as a paradoxical entry of the ineffable, infinite, and omnipotent God into the limitations of human life. It is a theological concept that evokes profound questions: How can the Ruler of the Universe, whom the entire created order is unable to contain, have been contained in a single, small human womb?

The Power that governs all dwelt in a small womb.
While dwelling there, He was holding the reins of the universe.
His Parent was ready for His will to be fulfilled.
The heavens and all the creation were filled by Him.
The Sun entered the womb, and in the height and depth
His rays were dwelling.

(Hymns on the Nativity *21.6)*

Not only the bare fact of the Incarnation but also its specific circumstances are miraculous and paradoxical: '[God] deprived the married womb; He made fruitful the virgin womb' (*Hymns on the Nativity* 21.17). Far from showing a weakness, these apparent contradictions show the majesty of the Creator, the 'Lord of natures.'

Yet these are not pointless displays of might; instead they are the concessions of a loving God to human frailty:

> God had seen that we worshiped creatures.
> He put on a created body to catch us by our habit.
> Behold by this fashioned one our Fashioner healed us,
> and by this creature our Creator revived us.
>
> (Hymns on the Nativity *21.12)*

Thus this miraculous and paradoxical self-abasement of God is clearly motivated by love for humankind. Ephrem often associates the language and imagery of divine compassion, mercy, and maternal love with the Incarnation. Among his many epithets for Christ is 'the Compassionate One,' a title which he applies in virtually every moment in the life of Christ. The feast of the Incarnation, the Nativity, is the day on which 'the Compassionate One came out to sinners' (*Nat*. 4.5). Even before his birth, 'He dwelt [in Mary's womb] because of His compassion' (*Nat*. 21.8). The Compassionate One, he says, put on the garment of the body to rescue Adam:

> He was 'wrapped in swaddling clothes . . .
> He put on the garments of youth . . .
> [and] the water of baptism . . .
> [and] the linen garments in death':
> All these [garments] are changes
> that the Compassionate One first shed and then put on again
> when He contrived to put on Adam the glory he had shed.
> He entwined swaddling clothes with [Adam's] fig leaves,
> and he put on garments in place of his skins.
> He was baptized for [Adam's] wrongdoing and embalmed for his death.
> He rose and raised him up in glory.
>
> (Nat. *23.12–13)*

That same Compassionate One 'bore our pain' (*Nat*. 3.2). 'He endured spitting and scourging, thorns and nails for our sake' (*Nat*. 18.35).

Out of compassion and mercy, Christ freed human beings and all creation from the slavery of idolatry (*Nat*. 22.4–7). Ephrem relates this theme to the Roman tradition of temporarily releasing slaves for the Saturnalia:

> The mercy of the High One was revealed,
> and he came down to free His creation.
> In this blessed month in which manumission takes place,
> the Lord came to slavery to call the slaves to freedom.
> Blessed is He Who brought manumission!
>
> (Nat. *22.5)*

Finally, Christians are expected to imitate the merciful condescension of their redeemer. Addressing Christ in his own voice, Ephrem says:

> O [You] Greater than measure Who became immeasurably small,
> from glorious splendor you humbled Yourself to ignominy.
> Your indwelling mercy inclined You to all this.
> Let Your compassion incline me to become praiseworthy in [spite of] my evil.
>
> (Nat. *21.13)*

The same is expected of all Christians since their baptism is a rebirth from the side of Christ, 'the Compassionate One who came to take up the body that would be struck so that by the opening of His side he might break through the way into Paradise' (*Nat*. 8.4).

We are all expected to reciprocate, as Ephrem reminds his congregation once again on the feast of the Nativity:

> On this day on which God came into the presence of sinners,
> let not the just man exalt himself in his mind over the sinner.
> On this day on which the Lord of all came among servants,
> let the lords also bow down to their servants lovingly.
> On this day when the Rich One was made poor for our sake,
> let the rich man also make the poor man a sharer at his table.
> On this day a gift came out to us without our asking for it;
> let us then give alms to those who cry out and beg from us.
> This is the day when the high gate opened to us for our prayers;
> let us also open the gates to the seekers who have strayed but sought [forgiveness].
>
> *(*Nat. *1.92–96)*

Finally, Ephrem explicitly binds this imitation of Christ, the Compassionate One, to non-violent behavior:

> Glorious is the Compassionate One
> Who did not use violence, and without force, by wisdom,
> He was victorious. He gave a type to human beings
> that by power and wisdom they might conquer discerningly.
>
> *(*Nat. *8.5)*

The divine condescension to humankind in the Incarnation has brought about a permanent change in the relationship between human beings and their Creator:

> [t]he Deity imprinted Itself on humanity,
> so that humanity might also be cut into the seal of the Deity.
>
> *(*Nat. *1.99)*

In addition to this language of seals and stamps, which he shares with the Logos theology of Greek Christianity, Ephrem expresses the intimate union of divine and human with the language of painting, likening it to the artist's blending of pigments:

> Glorious is the Wise One Who allied and joined
> Divinity with humanity,
> One from the height and the other from below.
> He mingled the natures like pigments,
> and an image came into being: the God-human!
>
> *(*Nat. *8.2)*

The similarity of Ephrem's thought here to Athanasius's dictum, 'The Word of God became human so that we might become divine' has been noted.[31] But the difference in Ephrem's view needs also to be stressed. For him the Incarnation not only opens up the way to theosis but it also brings a humanization of God. He explores the dimensions of that humanization of God especially through images of birth and suckling. In the Incarnation:

> Christ entered [Mary's] womb a mighty warrior
> and inside her womb He put on fear.
> He entered Nourisher of all
> and He acquired hunger.
> He entered the One who gives drink to all
> and He acquired thirst.
> Stripped and laid bare, He emerged from [her womb]
> the One who clothes all.
>
> (Nat. *11.8)*

The image of the suckling child provides a radical image of divine love for humankind. To the infant Christ Ephrem says:

> [i]t is as if your love hungers for human beings
> . . . what moves you so to bestow yourself
> upon each who has seen you? . . .
> Whence did it come to you so to hunger for human beings?
>
> (Nat. *13.12–14)*

On the one hand, the Son freely chose to become incarnate: 'By His will, He clothed himself with a body' (*Nat*. 3.5). Yet this choice is clearly prompted by love, and it has the result that He became truly needy by this mingling of divinity with humanity:

> Glory to Him Who never needs us to thank Him.
> Yet He [became] needy for He loves us, and He thirsted for He cherishes us.
> And He asks us to give to Him so that He may give us even more.
> His Fruit was mingled with our human nature
> to draw us out toward Him Who bent down to us.
> By the Fruit of the Root He will graft us onto His Tree.
>
> (Nat. *3.17)*

Perhaps the strongest image of the reciprocity which results from God's condescension to us occurs in a context not of the Incarnation but rather in its figurative equivalent, God's willingness to be clothed in human language, that is to say, the existence of revealed scripture.[32] In this regard Ephrem characterizes the Deity as like a nursing mother or wet nurse:

> Attuned to us is the Deity as a nursing woman to an infant,
> observing the time for its wellbeing, knowing the time for weaning it,
> when it is to be nurtured with milk and when to be fed with solid food,
> weighing and offering benefits according to the measure of its maturity.
>
> (Hymns on the Church *25.18)*

This image of the Triune God pondering the right moment to move each human being from milk to solid food provides the perfect transition from Ephrem's understanding of the Incarnation as a singular historical event, the culmination of the history of salvation, to his notion that it is an ongoing reality accessible to each human being according to the level of his or her spiritual advancement.

The ongoing, individualized presence of God to each human being

Although God's grand concession to human frailty took place uniquely in the Incarnation, it also continues to take place in every time and place for each individual human being. God is revealed to each according to his or her capacity to perceive:

> He was cheerful among the infants as a baby;
> awesome was He among the Watchers[33] as a commander.
> Too awesome was He for John to loosen His sandals;
> accessible was He for sinners who kissed His feet.
> The Watchers as Watchers saw Him;
> according to the degree of his knowledge each person saw Him.
> Everyone according to the measure of his discernment
> thus perceived Him, that One greater than all.
>
> (Nat. *4.197–200)*

The encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4)

For Ephrem, Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4 is especially symbolic of the individualized relationship God conducts with each human being:[34]

> The glorious fount of Him Who was sitting
> at the well as Giver of drink to all,
> flows to each according to His will:
> different springs according to those who drink.
> From the well a single undifferentiated drink
> came up each time for those who drank.
> The Living Fount lets distinct blessings
> flow to distinct people.
>
> (Virg. *23.2)*

But, not satisfied merely to meet each of us at our present level of spiritual discernment, God leads each of us step by step to higher levels of understanding. Again, the Samaritan woman is paradigmatic of this process:

> Because she in her love said, 'The Messiah will come,'
> He revealed to her with love, 'I am He.'
> That He was a prophet she believed already,
> soon after, that He was the Messiah . . .
> . . . she is a type of our humanity
> that He leads step by step.
>
> (Virg. *22.21)*

Most ancient commentators on the story of the Samaritan woman saw her as an immoral woman, one who had been divorced many times or who had simply lived with several men without benefit of marriage. Ephrem found another solution to her having had five husbands and a sixth who was not really her husband. Like Tamar (Gen. 38:11) or like Sarah in the *Book of Tobit* (6:10–8:21), she had been unlucky in marriage: her husbands had died, so no man was brave enough to marry her. Thus her sixth husband did not share her marriage bed. This little detail is not only indicative of Ephrem's

style of commentary—one that is narrative, literary, and based on a broad familiarity with scripture. It is also significant that having removed the cloud of opprobrium from over her head, Ephrem moves on to portray the Samaritan woman as an apostle, prophet, and type of the Theotokos, the Mother of God. He praises her for her readiness to share her insight into Jesus' messianic identity:

> Blessed are you, O woman, for not suppressing
> your judgment about what you discovered.
>
> (Virg. *23.1.1–2)*

Ephrem notes that just as Jesus' love for her led him to meet her need, her love for her neighbors led her to share her news with them:

> The glorious Treasury was Himself present
> for your need because of His love.
> Your love was zealous
> to share your treasure with your city.
> Blessed woman, your discovery became
> the Discoverer of the lost.
>
> (Virg. *23.1.3–8)*

Also laudable is the immediacy of her response to one small sign, to be contrasted with the obstinacy of those who refused to accept even the greater evidence of miracles. In her revelation to others of what she had heard, she is like Mary who conceived by her ear and thereby brought the Son to the world:

> [Praise] to you, o woman in whom I see
> a wonder as great as in Mary!
> For she from within her womb
> in Bethlehem brought forth His body as a child,
> but you by your mouth made Him manifest
> as an adult in Shechem, the town of His father's household.
> Blessed are you, woman, who brought forth by your mouth
> light for those in darkness.
> Mary, the thirsty land in Nazareth,
> conceived our Lord by her ear.
> You, too, O woman thirsting for water,
> conceived the Son by your hearing.
> Blessed are your ears that drank the source
> that gave drink to the world.
> Mary planted Him in the manger,
> but you [planted him] in the ears of His hearers.
>
> (Virg. *23.4–5)*

Like the words of the prophets, what she spoke became reality:

> Your word, O woman, became a mirror
> in which He might see your hidden heart.
> 'The Messiah,' you had said, 'will come,
> and when He comes, He will give us everything.'
> Behold the Messiah for Whom you waited, modest woman!
> Through your voice . . . prophecy was fulfilled.
>
> (Virg. *23.6)*

She is comparable to the apostles since even before the Twelve were permitted to do so, she preached the good news of salvation to the gentiles:

> Your voice, O woman, first brought forth fruit,
> even before the apostles [brought fruit] with their preaching.
> The apostles were forbidden to announce Him
> among pagans and Samaritans.
> Blessed is your mouth that He opened and confirmed.
> The Storehouse of life took and gave you to sow.
> [Your] city, dead as Sheol,
> You entered, and you revived your dead [land].
>
> *(*Virg. *23.7)*

Spiritual progress and sanctification or theosis

Mary and the Beloved Disciple at the foot of the cross (John 19:25–27)

Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the Beloved Disciple are also especially significant in Ephrem's understanding of the ongoing process of the Incarnation in sanctification or theosis, the full restoration in each human being of the lost imago dei. Mary and John (with whom the Beloved Disciple has often been identified) see in one another the complementary mysteries of God's condescending love for us and the bold access to divine love now open to human beings.[35] Through them we, too, may see this twofold mystery of the Savior. John and Mary, the mother of Jesus, are 'types' through whom we are able to see Christ as in a mirror while they themselves saw Him in one another. Ephrem begins by evoking the scene at the foot of the cross as it is portrayed in John's gospel, where Jesus invites Mary and John to regard one another as mother and son:

> Blessed are you, O woman, whose Lord and son
> entrusted you to one fashioned in His image.
> The Son of your womb did not wrong your love,
> but to the son of His bosom He entrusted you.
> Upon your bosom you caressed Him when He was small,
> and upon His bosom He also caressed [John],
> so that when He was crucified
> He repaid all you had advanced to Him,
> the debt of His upbringing.
> For, the Crucified repaid debts;
> even yours was repaid by Him.
> He drank from your breast visible milk,
> but [John drank] from His bosom hidden mysteries.
> Confidently He approached your breast;
> confidently [John] approached and lay upon His bosom.
> Since you missed the sound of His voice,
> He gave you his harp
> to be a consolation to you.
>
> *(*Virg. *25.2–3)*

The love and care which flowed from Mary to her son are echoed by the love of Jesus for John and repaid by entrusting her to his care. John shows a special resemblance to Jesus, Ephrem assumes,

because he takes his place as Mary's son. But a deeper ethical mystery is contained here: the love of John for his Lord led him to imitate him, thus bringing into higher relief in him the imago dei engraved on each human being:

> The youth who loved our Lord very much,
> who portrayed [and] put Him on and resembled Him,
> was zealous in all these matters to resemble Him:
> in his speech, his aspect and his ways.
> The creature put on his Creator,
> and he resembled Him although indeed he did not resemble what He was.
> It is amazing how much the clay is able to be imprinted
> with the beauty of its sculptor.
>
> (Virg. *25.4)*

By meditating on the relationship of Jesus to His mother, John was better able to understand the Incarnation:

> The youth in the woman was seeing
> how much that Exalted One was lowered,
> how He entered [and] dwelt in a weak womb
> and emerged [and] was suckled with weak milk.
>
> (Virg. *25.8.1–4)*

Meanwhile, by observing the behavior of the Beloved Disciple Mary learned about the possibility of spiritual growth and the boldness it encourages:

> The woman also wondered at how much he grew
> that he went up and lay upon the bosom of God.
> The two of them were amazed at one another,
> how much they were able to grow by grace.
> [It is] You, Lord, Whom they saw . . .
> while observing one another:
> Your mother saw You in Your disciple;
> And he saw You in Your mother.
>
> (Virg. *25.8.5–9.4)*

Neither does the benefit of this insight stop with these two privileged and holy people, it extends to all who are willing to look deeply into their fellow human beings:

> O the seers who at every moment
> see You, Lord, in a mirror
> manifest a type so that we, too, in one another
> may see You, our Savior.
>
> (Virg. *25.9.5–8)*

Consecrated virginity

For Ephrem, thinking of the story of Martha and Mary, Mary Magdalen exemplifies perfectly the concentration on the inner presence of Christ that leads to the full restoration of the imago dei:

She turned her face away from everything
to gaze on one beauty alone.
Blessed is her love that was intoxicated, not sober,
so that she sat at His feet to gaze at Him.
Let you also portray the Messiah in your heart
and love Him in your mind.

(Virg. *24.7.3–8)*

More broadly speaking, for Ephrem it is the consecrated virgin who has most fully stripped off the old Adam to put on the new at baptism. Her body is clothed in a new garment; it is the Temple of God and His Royal Palace. But however strongly Ephrem admonishes the virgin to preserve her sexual innocence, it is clear that this is not an end in itself, but rather it is symbolic of the full dedication of self to God which is the goal of every Christian life:[36]

Let chastity be portrayed in your eyes and in your ears the sound of truth.
Imprint your tongue with the word of life and upon your hands [imprint] all alms.
Stamp your footsteps with visiting the sick,
and let the image of your Lord be portrayed in your heart.
Tablets are honored because of the image of kings.
How much more will one be honored who has portrayed the Lord in all the senses.

(Virg. *2.15)*

Biblical symbols and the presence of God in historical events

Among the historical symbols, biblical typology plays the central role. The events in the history of Israel narrated in Hebrew scripture have religious significance for all people. Like most early Christian writers, however, Ephrem saw the Hebrew scripture as preliminary sketches, as shadows, when compared with the realities of the New Testament:

[Christ's] power perfected the types,
and His truth the mysteries,
His interpretation the similes,
His explanation the sayings,
and His assurances the difficulties.
By His sacrifice He abolished sacrifices,
and libations by His incense,
and the [passover] lambs by His slaughter,
the unleavened [bread] by His bread,
and the bitter [herbs] by His Passion.
By His healthy meal
He weaned [and] took away the milk.
By His baptism were abolished
the bathing and sprinkling
that the elders of the People taught.

(Virg. *8.8–10)*

Despite the intrinsic importance of the events and persons of the 'Old Testament,' they are only 'antitypes' which were fulfilled in the 'types' of the New Testament. On the one hand, the Passover Lamb is an anticipation of Christ and of the salvation gained through Him. To attempt to understand

Christ without knowing about the Passover would be to deprive oneself of the depth and richness of meaning placed in human history by God Himself. Yet conversely, in Ephrem's view, to stop with the Passover Lamb rather than interpreting it as a symbol of Christ would mean missing the fullness of God's revelation and accepting a truncated version of the meaning of history.

Ephrem's hymns are permeated with typological exegesis. The central figures of this typology are Jesus and Mary. Ephrem presents a rich variety of Old Testament types for Christ. In the second of his Nativity Hymns he systematically presents Jesus as the prophet, priest, and king. His selection of Old Testament figures as forerunners of Christ is similar to many other early Christian writers, but he adds unexpected interpretations as well. For example, Jesus is anticipated not only by Isaac, Melchizedek, Moses, and David, but also by Jacob, who is kicked by Esau but does not retaliate.

Ephrem's Mariology is central to his understanding of the Incarnation. Mary was chosen because she was most pleasing to God. Yet she who gave birth to the Son of the Most High was given birth by Him in baptism. Paradoxically, Mary gave birth to and nourished and cared for the Incarnate One who gave life, nourishment, and care to her. In this she represents all humans and indeed all creation:

> By power from Him Mary's womb became able
> to bear the One Who bears all.
> From the great treasury of all creation
> Mary gave to Him everything that she gave.
> She gave Him milk from what He made exist.
> She gave Him food from what He had created.
> As God, He gave milk to Mary.
> In turn, as man, He was given suck by her.
>
> (Nat. *4.182–185)*

Her theological importance is confirmed by the wealth of Ephrem's typology for Mary. She is not only the second Eve, but she is also a second Sarah, Rachel, and Anna; she is favorably compared and contrasted with Tamar, Ruth, and Rahab (*Hymns on the Nativity* 8.13, 13.2–5, 9.7–16, 15.8, 16.12).[37] Most unusual is Ephrem's imagery drawn from the Jewish priestly cult to provide a typology for Mary's role. The virginity of Mary and of all the 'daughters of the covenant' is the vestment of the High Priest, who is Christ:

> May all the evidences of virginity of Your brides
> be preserved by You. They are the purple [robes]
> and no one may touch them
> except our King. For virginity
> is like a vestment for You, the High Priest.
>
> (Nat. *16.13)*

Like the Ark of the Covenant, Mary is honored not for herself but for the divine presence within her:

> Joseph rose
> to serve in the presence of his Lord
> Who was within Mary. The priest serves
> in the presence of Your Ark because of Your holiness.
>
> (Nat. *16.16)*

The Tablets containing the teachings of the Mosaic Law also constitute an antitype which is fulfilled in Mary:

> Moses bore the tablets of stone
> that His Lord had written. And Joseph escorted
> the pure tablet in whom was dwelling
> the Son of the Creator. The tablets were left behind
> since the world was filled with Your teaching.
>
> (Nat. *16.17*)

These unusual typologies are all based on the premise that in the Incarnation, Mary became the dwelling place of God on earth.

To grasp more fully the significance for Ephrem of these metaphors one must be aware that in Syriac 'virginity' (bethulutha) is synonymous with 'chastity' (qaddishutha) which also means 'holiness.'[38] Behind the coincidence in meanings between 'chastity' and 'holiness' is ultimately a notion of mysterious power, untouchable sacral presence. Mary as the virgin par excellence is uniquely suited to be the holy one in whom—or perhaps better the holy place in which—God deigns to be present.

The sacred dimension of all of history

Not only the events described in scripture, but all historical events must have profound religious significance. Ephrem's *Hymns against Julian*, along with the *Nisibene Hymns*, display his kinship with the Jewish prophets. Like them, he contemplates the political and military events of his time in the light of his ethical and theological tenets, looking for evidence of divine activity, rewards, punishments, and edifying moral lessons. Living as he did in an area at the easternmost edge of the Roman empire constantly under the pressure of Sassanid Persia, Ephrem was presented with dramatic historical events for his contemplation. When the Persian army besieged his town of Nisibis for the third time and it was spared even after its protecting city wall had been broken down, he composed poetry about salvation and grace:

> [God] saved us without a wall and taught that He is our wall.
> He saved us without a king and made known that He is our king.
> He saved us in all from all and showed He is all.
> He saved us by His grace and again revealed
> that He is freely gracious and life-giving. From each who boasts
> He takes away the boast and gives to him His grace.
>
> (Nisibene Hymns *2.2*)

Warnings against idolatry and encouragement in adversity are as prominent in his hymns as in the pronouncements of Jeremiah and Isaiah. When the apostate Roman emperor Julian brought his army into Mesopotamia, ostentatiously offering sacrifice to the old pagan deities, pressuring the Christians of Mesopotamia to join in that worship, but finally dying in battle (in June 363 CE), Ephrem was not at a loss for words. He elaborated the view that God had made the apostate emperor Julian the representative and symbol of all who hold erroneous views—not only pagans but also heretics and Jews. His defeat was a sign to all nations of the ultimate fate of those who oppose God.

The first of Ephrem's five *Hymns against Julian* stands apart from the rest since it was written prior to the emperor's death in battle. Here the poet offers a message of hope and perseverance to the people of Nisibis, threatened with persecution. The other four hymns reiterate and develop that message in the light of subsequent events. Rather than focusing on the loss of their city to the Persians, a catastrophe caused by Nisibene acquiescence to Julian's re-establishment of paganism there, Ephrem emphasizes that the claims of paganism have been proved false by the fate of the apostate emperor. The political events provide a larger-than-life drama of the cosmic conflict between

good and evil. God's partisans, the true members of the Church of Nisibis, with the encouragement of the watching angels, withstood the onslaughts of Satan in the form of imperial persecution and Persian military attacks.

Using a favorite metaphor, the mirror as the instrument of divine ethical lessons, Ephrem takes the apostate emperor as the model of human pride as well as of political promotion of religious error. His policies unmasked the false Christians within the church; his ignominious death demonstrates the folly of his pride as well as the falsity of his beliefs. The divine purpose in the defeat and death of the Roman emperor was to present to all people a model of the vanity of idolatry. At the same time, the fidelity of Christians has been tested and many have been found wanting during the pagan emperor's brief reign. Weak or false Christians have returned openly to paganism, or they have attacked their Creator in the contentious error of the Arian heresy. The Jewish people, he contends, have also returned to idolatrous worship. On the other hand, the city of Nisibis presents, again as if in a mirror, a model for fidelity to God, its rewards, and the consequences of its lapse. Reinforcing this primary imagery is the symbol of the church as the true vine, beneficially pruned by the rigors of persecution:

> Rely on the truth, my brothers, and be not afraid
> for our Lord is not so weak as to fail us in the test.
> He is the power on which the world and its inhabitants depend.
> The hope of His Church depends on Him.
> Who is able to sever its heavenly roots?
>
> (Hymns against Julian *1.1)*

> Although the branch is living, on it are dead fruits
> blooming only outwardly.
> The wind tried them and cast off the wild grapes.
>
> (Jul. *1.5)*

Several other metaphors serve to teach the same lesson: separation of the wheat from the tares, the purification of gold in the furnace, and separation of the curds and whey in cheesemaking (*Jul.* 1.10–13, 2.10–11; 1.13, 2.24, 4.1; 4.2).

To these symbols current in both biblical and general Hellenistic contexts, Ephrem adds biblical examples of faithless sovereigns and the consequences of their erroneous ways: Nebuchadnezzar, Jeroboam, Ahab, Jotham, Manasseh, Jezebel, Athaliah, and Saul provide precedents for Julian's errors as well as his fate (*Jul.* 1.8, 1.20, 2.2, 4.5, 4.8). The attendant notions of true and false prophecy provide a context for his contention that in this case the church has followed the course of Daniel, confronting the pagan ruler, whereas the Jewish people have followed the precedent of the Israelites under Jeroboam, worshiping the golden calf (*Jul.* 1.16–20, 2.2.). While this general approach, aptly named by Ruether 'prophetic anti-Judaism,'[39] is typical of patristic writers, Ephrem pursues his view with tenacious originality, accompanied, one suspects, by a modicum of perverse misrepresentation. In support of the parallel with the Israelite worship of the golden calf, for example, he associates Julian's bull coinage (see Figures 59.3a and b) with his attempt to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem as well as claiming that the music and sacrifice of traditional Jewish worship resemble pagan worship in its raucousness. Likewise, to the established argument that Daniel prophesied the permanent destruction of the Jewish Temple, he adds the claim implicit in Constantine's building program but not generally stated in theological polemics that Christian pilgrimage functions as a substitute for the Jewish cult of Jerusalem (*Jul.* 4.23–25).

Throughout these hymns, he exploits an extensive variety of animal imagery. The Orphic and broadly Hellenistic notion of a philanthropic shepherd king, already well-established as a model for Christ, is presented as a foil for Julian, the bad king (*Jul.* 1.1–2). Rather than a good shepherd, he is a wolf in sheep's clothing, or a he-goat, favoring the goats rather than the sheep (*Jul.* 2.1–4). The latter

Figure 59.3a and b Billon or bronze *follis* (AE1) of Julian II, 'the Apostate' (an example of his 'bull' coinage).[40] Photo American Numismatic Society

image has the added punch of alluding to Julian's unpopular beard as well as intimating lasciviousness (*Jul.* 2.6–9). Ephrem's almost apocalyptic description of the conflict between the forces of good and evil is enhanced by his association of the pagans with vermin, dragons, and the primal chaos as well as with the more mundane insults of association with hogs and filth (*Jul.* 1.3, 1.5, 2.13).

Finally, Ephrem's symbolic imagination provides several examples of the ironic outcome of Julian's efforts. Considering it suitable that 'the punishment should fit the crime,' he finds numerous coincidences to confirm this view. For example, the emperor's death near Babylon in conjunction with his 'denial' of Daniel's prophecy cements the parallel of Julian with Nebuchadnezzar (*Jul.* 1.18–20). Moreover, Ephrem spins out in elaborate detail the inherent contradiction of Julian's attempt to use Chaldean religion to defeat Persians, and the paradox that he was misled by the oracles to become himself the sacrificial goat (*Jul.* 2.4–25, 4.5–14). The coincidental features of his uncle Julian's fate should have astonished the emperor as they did Ephrem (*Jul.* 4.3). Likewise laden with significance is the similarity of Julian's death by a lance to the death of his sacrificial animals, both of which are implicitly contrasted with the death of the True Lamb who, being pierced, released humankind from the curse of the lance that barred the gate to Paradise (*Jul.* 3.14).

After the death of Julian, the Roman army had chosen a new emperor, Jovian, an orthodox Christian. Seeing no alternative to surrender under the disadvantageous terms offered him by Shapur, Jovian accepted them. These terms included cession to Persia of the city of Nisibis without its inhabitants. The city was, in Ephrem's eyes, the sacrificial lamb that saved the Roman army (*Jul.* 2.15.6). Unlike Ammianus Marcellinus, however, who portrays the fate of Nisibis in exclusively negative terms, Ephrem stresses that, although the city itself was ceded to Persia, the Persian ruler showed respect for its Christian churches and permitted its citizens to depart for Roman territory rather than executing them, enslaving them, or exiling them into the eastern reaches of the Persian empire, as had been the fate of the inhabitants of other recalcitrant Mesopotamian cities (*Jul.* 2.22–27). To celebrate his victory and show appropriate disdain for the religion of the Roman army that had attacked his empire, the Persian king was apparently satisfied to destroy the pagan temples associated specifically with Julian (*Jul.* 2.22). Still, the entire Christian population of this fortress city migrated within a short time to the adjacent cities of the Roman empire. Ephrem was among those who went to Edessa, where he would spend his last ten years. Thus the heroic struggle of his native city, a symbol of Rome and of Christianity, against the mighty Persian empire, a struggle which had occupied most of his adult life, ended in defeat and disgrace. The 'constant, unwearying herald' was surrendered to the Persians (*Jul.* 2.16.6). As he meditates on these events in his *Nisibene Hymns* and in his *Hymns against Julian*, Ephrem again shows himself to be a genuine heir to the Jewish prophetic tradition, interpreting historical events as directed by divine Providence toward the attainment of justice in this world.[41] There must be a reason for God's allowing Nisibis to be taken. For him that reason is clear: the apostasy of the Christian Roman emperor and of those who followed him in reinstating pagan worship:

Who else has so multiplied altars?
Who else has so honored all the evil spirits?
Who else has so pleased all the demons?
He angered only the One, and he was broken.
In him was confuted the entire faction of wrong,
a force unable to support its worshipers!

(Jul. *4.6*)

Human beings in the divine image and divine presence in all of nature

Ephrem's emphasis on the Incarnation and his extension of that historical moment into the process of sanctification show clearly that human beings have a special place in the created order:

Blessed is He Who engraved our soul and adorned and betrothed her to Him[self].
Blessed is He Who made our body a Tabernacle for His hiddenness.
Blessed is He Who with our tongue interpreted His secrets.
Let us give thanks to that Voice Whose praise on our lyre
and Whose power on our kithara are sung.

(Nat. *3.7.1–5*)

He is He Who Himself constructed the senses of our minds
so that we might sing on our lyre something that the mouth of the bird
is unable to sing in its melodies.
Glory to the One Who saw that we had been pleased
to resemble the animals in our rage and greed,
and [so] He descended and became one of us that we might become heavenly.

(Nat. *3.16*)

Although it is clear that human beings with the imago dei enjoy a unique position in the world, certain material things enjoy a privileged place since they link the world of nature to the world of scripture. That privileged place is rooted in nature, in their physical properties and their names. So oil is symbolic of Christ and the salvation brought by Him, not only because He is literally, 'the Anointed One' who fulfills the roles of priest, prophet, and king, but also due to the natural properties of oil: its healing and strengthening properties, its capacity to provide light, its use with pigments for painting an image, its ability to ease forces in conflict, and even its property of floating on water, as Jesus walked on the water (*Virg*. 4–7)! All these properties resonate in the baptismal anointing in which the imago dei is restored to us:

The lamp returned our lost things, and the Anointed also [returned] our treasures.
The lamp found the coin, and the Anointed [found] the image of Adam.

(Virg. *5.8.5–6*)

The bread and wine of the Eucharist, although they provide a less fertile field for Ephrem's imagination, play a similar role:[42]

Blessed is the Shepherd Who became the sheep for our absolution.
Blessed is the Vineshoot that became the cup of our salvation.
Blessed also is the Cluster, the source of the medicine of life.

Blessed also is the Ploughman Who Himself became
the grain of wheat that was sown and the sheaf that was reaped.
He is the Master Builder Who became a tower for our refuge.

(Nat. *3.15)*

Not only the elements of the sacraments, however, but other material things and concepts are symbolic of Christ. So Satan's temptations of Jesus have ironic appropriateness: he tempted with bread the 'Sustainer of all,' with stones, 'the perfect Stone,' with kingship the true king (*Virg*. 14). Even things without a symbolic tradition in scripture may be seen as representative of Christ's altruistic suffering. In one of his Virginity Hymns he considers a long series of minerals, plants, and animals all worked by human craft for our benefit despite the harm done to them. Like a Buddhist or Manichaean sage, Ephrem notes that they all suffer for our benefit, making them symbolic of Christ, as the following excerpt from the list shows:

Iron and a sharp stake, indeed, pierce the pearl
like that One Who was pierced by nails and on the cross.
It becomes by its suffering an adornment for humankind.
When a fruit is eaten, by means of its suffering its taste
pours out in the mouth. This is a symbol of that Fruit
that brings to life His eaters when His body is eaten.
The sheep in its shame strips off its garment and cloak
and gives all of it to its shearers,
like the Lamb Who divided His garments for His crucifiers.
All these things teach by their symbols:
they open by their sufferings the treasure of their riches,
and the suffering of the Son of the Gracious One is the key of His treasures.

(Hymns on Virginity *11.9, 12, 17, 20)*

Finally, every beauty of daily life is a tangible reminder of the graciousness of God:

But remaining are all those things the Gracious One made in His mercy.
Let us see those things that He does for us every day!
How many tastes for the mouth! How many beauties for the eye!
How many melodies for the ear! How many scents for the nostrils!
Who can be compared to the goodness of these little things!

(Virg. *3.16)*

Abbreviations

APB = Acta Patristica et Byzantina
CSCO = Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
GEDSH = Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage, ed. Sebastian Brock *et al*. Piscataway, NJ, 2011
Hugoye = Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies. http://www.acad.cua.edu/syrcom/Hugoye
JECS = Journal of Early Christian Studies
OC = Oriens Christianus
OHECS The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies. Edited by Susan A. Harvey and David G. Hunter. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008.
PdO = Parōle de l'Orient

PO = Patrologia Orientalis
SA = Studia Anselmiana
SP = Studia Patristica
VC = *Vigiliae Christianae*
ZAC = *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*
Jul. = Beck 1957
Nat. = Beck 1959
Virg. = Beck 1962

Notes

1 On the history and culture of Nisibis and its Christians up to and during Ephrem's time there, see Fiey 1977, Bundy 2000 and 2002. On the origins of Christianity more broadly in Syro-Mesopotamia, see Murray 2004: 1–38, Van Rompay 2008, Harrak 2014, Tubach 2015.
2 On relations between the two empires, see Drijvers 2009.
3 See also *Hymns on Virginity* 37.10. All translations of the Syriac are mine and based on Beck's editions.
4 On Aberkios and his inscription, now see Ferguson 2017 and Tabbernee 2017.
5 Drijvers 1970, Murray 2004: 1–38; on the problematic nature of these categories, see Williams 1996, Boyarin 2009.
6 Koltun-Fromm 2010.
7 Golitzin 2003, Tuschling 2007, Fomicheva 2013.
8 On new perspectives in the study of Judaism, see Collins 2010.
9 Taylor 2002, Millar 2011, Andrade 2014.
10 For example, Bou Mansour 1988, Den Biesen 2006. On Ephrem's use of Greek philosophical concepts, see Possekel 1999. Recent work has drawn attention to Ephrem's melding of poetic and rhetorical skills; see, for example, Den Biesen 2006, Botha 2006 and 2008, but still there is hesitation to claim the influence of Greek rhetoric.
11 For a comprehensive treatment of the types of writings in Ephrem's corpus, see Brock 2007. On the problem of whether to translate his *madrashe* as 'teaching songs' rather than 'hymns,' see Lattke 1989, Den Biesen 2006: 329.
12 Griffith 1986. On Ephrem's Trinitarian theology in the broader context, Ayres 2004, Possekel 2009, Wickes 2015a, Fiano 2015.
13 Keser-Kayaalp and Erdoğan 2013, Possekel 2017.
14 An inscription identifies the building as the baptistery completed by Bishop Vologeses in 359/60. Its popular designation is the result of later overbuilding and reuse as a burial place for Jacob; eventually (after destruction by an earthquake of the basilica Jacob had constructed) it functioned as a church; this probably led to its popular identification as 'Church of Mar Jacob.'
15 Some overviews of Ephrem's life: McVey 1989: 5–28, Brock 2011, Wickes 2015a: 3–14. On sources for Ephrem's life, Brock 1999, Amar 2011. On Ephrem and women's choirs, Amar 1995, Harvey 2005, McVey 2007.
16 Lange 2008.
17 On female imagery in the *Odes* and in Ephrem, Brock 1990b, Harvey 1994 and 2012, McVey 2001 and 2014.
18 On the hymn in the *Acts of Thomas*, Ferreira 2002; on Ephrem's hymns, Mathews 1994; on the broad cultural and religious resonances of Ephrem's hymns, Fredrikson 2003.
19 Griffith 1999a, 1999b, 2001, and 2002, Lieu 2015: 151–76.
20 Séd 1968, Kronholm 1978, Brock 1990a, Maier 2012, Monnickendam 2015.
21 Martikainen 1974, Griffith 1987, McVey 1989: 34–9, 221–57.
22 Beck 1949 and 1953, Shepardson 2008a; on 'Arians' see Lyman 2008.
23 Rouwhorst 1989, Naduvilezham 2000, Shepardson 2008b, Walters 2011.
24 McVey 1990, cf. Daelemans 2011 and 2012.
25 Shepardson 2008a, Wickes 2015b.
26 On his later influence, see Palmer 1998 and 1999.
27 Brock 2002 and 2010, Petersen 2011.
28 On the corpus of ancient translations, see Den Biesen 2011: 16–21.
29 See, e.g., Palmer 1995, 2003, and 2009, Brock 1999, Van Rompay 2007, Butts forthcoming 2017.
30 The literature on Ephrem's use of symbols is vast. The present essay draws principally on the *Hymns on the Nativity*, on *Julian* and on *Virginity* in Beck's editions; central to it are the insights of Murray 1975 and Brock 1992. See also Bou Mansour 1988, Den Biesen 2006.

31 Brock 1990a: 72–4, McVey 1989: 74, n. 66. For the broader context of *theosis* in Ephrem's thought, see Koonammakkal 1991, Brock 1992, Buck 1999, Daelemans 2011 and 2012.
32 Brock characterizes this as another sort of 'incarnation' of the Word (1990a: 45–9).
33 On 'Watchers,' a class of angels important to Ephrem, see now Tuschling 2007: 70–93, 153–75.
34 Further on Ephrem and the Samaritan woman, see McVey 1987–88 and 1989: 354–64, Beck 1990, McCarthy 2000: 198–204, Lange 2005: 65–6 and 2008: 381–6, Ri 2010, McVey 2017.
35 On these themes, see McVey 1989: 369–75; for a more comprehensive treatment, see Yousif 1989.
36 On Ephrem's understanding of virginity and of 'singleness' in the context of early Syriac tradition, see Koonammakal 1999.
37 Botha 2006.
38 On the notions of holiness more broadly, see Koltun-Fromm 2010.
39 Ruether 1974: 117–82.
40 Obverse: Portrait bust pearl-diademed, draped, cuirassed, right. Legend: D[ominus] N[oster] FL[avius] CL[audius] IVLI-ANVS P[ius] F[elix] AVG[ustus]; Reverse: Bull, head facing, standing right; two stars above: Legend SECVRITAS REIPVB[licae]. (Palm) ANT[iochia] Δ (palm). Minted at Antioch 4th officina. Weight 8.77 grams, Diameter 27.5 mm. ANS 1984.146.576. American Numismatic Society. On the much-disputed interpretation of the symbols on this coin, now see Woods 2000, Tougher 2004.
41 See Martikainen 1974, Griffith 1987.
42 For example, see *Hymns on Virginity* 16.2.4.5 and 31.13–14. Further on Ephrem's understanding of the Eucharist, see Yousif 1984.

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60
JULIAN THE APOSTATE

Michael Bland Simmons

In this chapter I offer a profile of a man whose ambition, had it been realized, would probably have meant this volume would never have been written. Whereas the preceding profiles speak of men and women whose lives contributed to the establishment of Christianity in its first few centuries, Julian lived the last years of his short life determined to restrain it in favour of a resurgence of pagan religious culture (Simmons forthcoming 2017a; forthcoming 2017b).[1]

Flavius Claudius Julianus (*c.* 331–63 CE) was born at Constantinople. His grandfather was Constantius Chlorus, a member of Diocletian's Tetrarchy, and his uncle was Constantine.[2] After Constantine's death in 337, his son Constantius II may have ordered the execution of Julian's father, Julius Constantius, and several of his male relatives. During this period Constantius II was ruling the eastern provinces of the empire. Julian's mother Basilina died when he was an infant, and her family assumed the responsibility of the young orphan and his half-brother Gallus, who was five years his senior. Basilina's former Scythian tutor, Mardonius, taught Julian in Nicomedia, and inculcated in him a great reverence for Greek culture. Eusebius the Arian bishop of the same city was his principal teacher.[3] It was during these formative years of his life that the basic attributes of Julian's disposition were being developed. Our sources inform us that he was eloquent, studious, shy, often inconsistent, very talkative, prone to nervousness, sexually chaste, extremely superstitious and he loved the applause of the masses.[4]

In 342 Constantius II sent Gallus and Julian to Macellum in central Turkey where they lived for six years (Henck 1999–2000).[5] Julian received a good education in Christian literature, including the scriptures, and we are told that eunuchs were assigned to prevent his wavering from the faith.[6] His love of Hellenism which had been inspired by Mardonius, continued to develop from his studies in Greek literature. It would be unreasonable to question the sincerity of his faith at this time, or the assertion that he became a reader in the church at Nicomedia.[7] Indeed, Christian writers of the period lament the emperor who had once been dedicated to the church, and pagans confirm his apostasy from a genuine faith.[8]

Constantius II recalled Gallus and Julian from Macellum in 348 to the capital. Julian studied rhetoric there and at Nicomedia until 351, often attending the lectures of Libanius (Elm 2012: 91f.), who became his life-long friend and dedicated several orations to him after he became emperor (Soz., *HE* 5.2; Smith 1995: 2). It was also during this time (348–51) that Julian met Maximus of Ephesus, who exerted a significant philosophical and religious (especially mystical) influence on the young man, and played a role in his apostasy.[9] Constantius II appointed Gallus Caesar in 351, and

Julian was given freedom to continue his studies in western Asia Minor at Pergamum and Ephesus under the Neoplatonic philosophers Aecesius, the disciple of Iamblichus, Eusebius and Chrysanthius, in addition to Maximus (Bowersock 1978: 28ff.; Smith 1995: 2ff.). The Iamblichean Neoplatonism espoused by these philosophers profoundly impacted his intellectual and spiritual development. Writing from Gaul in 358–9 to his fellow Neoplatonist Priscus, Julian referred to Iamblichus as a godlike man ranking next to Plato and Pythagoras.[10] Neoplatonism by this time was characterized by a combination of religious philosophy and a mystical experience often described as theurgy (Simmons 2015). The latter was associated with the Chaldaean theology and oracles which also had a significant influence on Porphyry. In 351 Julian had made the decision to renounce Christianity, and he was initiated into the Chaldaean theurgical rites by Maximus of Ephesus. From that time onward, Maximus continued to have a great influence on Julian, persuading him to convert to paganism, and was a moving force behind Julian's later attempts to revive Hellenism in the eastern provinces.[11] He was by his side when the emperor died during the Persian campaign in 363. Julian continued his studies in Asia Minor until Constantius II ordered the execution of Gallus for treason (354), at which time the younger brother was summoned to the imperial court at Milan. He was saved from execution on the charge of complicity by the intervention of the empress Eusebia.[12] The following year Julian went to Athens to study where he met the great Cappadocian father, St. Basil.[13] It proved to be a short stay because Constantius II summoned him to Milan where he was appointed Caesar on 6 November (Soz., *HE* 3.1; 5.2; Soc., *HE* 2.34; Eun., *Vit. phil.* 476). By December he was dispatched to Gaul to begin a campaign against the Germanic tribes.[14] After a decisive victory over the Goths at Strasbourg in 357, Constantius II became increasingly suspicious of his growing power[15] and eventually ordered the bulk of Julian's army to be transferred to the east to help in the Persian campaign against Shapur II (Amm. Marc. 20.4.1f.; Lib., *Or.* 28.92–117). Receiving the imperial order in Paris early in 360, Julian's troops mutinied and at once proclaimed their general the new emperor (Amm. Marc. 20.4.14). By the next year both armies were preparing for war, but Constantius II became ill and died in November. Now recognized as the sole emperor, Julian and his army entered Constantinople in December.[16] He soon began to mint coinage bearing his image (see Figure 60.1).

One of his first acts as emperor was the promulgation of the Edict on Religious Toleration which provided for the raising of temples, construction of altars, restoration of sacrifices and the reorganization of the pagan priesthood.[17] The major objective of this legislation was to promote the cultural revival of the eastern cities on the basis of Hellenic *paideia* (Lib., *Or.* 15.67; 18.23, 161; Von Nesselrath 2013; Greenwood 2014a; Simmons forthcoming 2017a). Libanius tells us that Julian very zealously participated in the programme. He sacrificed animals at dawn and dusk and turned his imperial gardens and palace into a pagan temple (Lib., *Or.* 12.80ff.; 17.4; Soc., *HE* 3.17). His fingers were stained red by the blood of so many animals (Lib., *Or.* 12.82). Julian moved quickly to reform the court at Constantinople (Soc., *HE* 3.1; Amm. Marc. 22.5.1–5). After expelling a large surplus of

Figure 60.1 Julian the emperor on a bronze coin minted at Antioch during 360–63 CE; Wikicommons; photo by Yves Léon Charles

Figure 60.2 Painting of *Julian the Apostate Presiding at a Conference of Sectarians*, by Edward Armitage (1875), in the Walker Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool; Wikicommons

barbers, eunuchs and cooks from the palace, he turned to reducing the number of secretaries in the civil service. He also restricted the mode of imperial transportation and the conveyance of necessities (Soc., *HE* 3.1). Gregory of Nazianzus interpreted these actions as an attempt to eliminate Christians who had served under Constantius II.[18] Although he was careful not to begin an official state persecution of the Christians for fear that this might produce martyrs,[19] Julian nonetheless systematically began to move against the religion that had been favoured since the conversion of Constantine.[20]

Early in his reign Julian recalled the bishops who had been exiled by Constantius II, which appeared to be an act of benevolence, but the true motives were most probably to cause internal dissension in the eastern churches.[21] This interpretation is tenable in light of legislation which deprived Christian clergy of the immunities, honours and provisions granted by Constantine (Theod., *HE* 3.3; Lieu 1986: 40–6). We must remember that Julian was familiar with the internal disputes of the Christians and could therefore distinguish between orthodox, Arian and heretical (e.g. Gnostic) believers (Julian, *Ep.* 40, *To Hecebolus* in later 362/early 363 from Antioch). Widows of clergy had to pay back money formerly supplied by imperial funds (Soz., *HE* 5.5). The emperor publicly ridiculed Christian bishops.[22] We are told that he refused to receive Christian embassies, did not send military aid to the Christian city of Nisibis during the Persian invasion and made another Christian city, Constantia, a tributary of the pagan stronghold Gaza. Christians in Caesarea in Cappadocia were heavily taxed (Soz., *HE* 5.3, 4; Balty 1974; Fowden 1978). Even though the emperor did not overtly persecute the Christians, he attempted to make it as difficult as possible for them, especially in the eastern provinces.[23]

Martyrdom, however, did occur sometimes tolerated by the emperor himself. At Palestinian Askalon and Gaza, Christian priests and virgins were tortured and executed, while at Sebaste a martyr's bones were burned and scattered.[24] Open persecutions, including the executions of Christians, broke out at Heliopolis and Emesa in Phoenicia, in the Thracian city of Dorystolum, and Arethusa in Syria (Theod., *HE* 3.3; Soz., *HE 5.10*). Sozomen informs us that Eusebius, Bestabus and Zeno became martyrs at Gaza, and unlike bishop George's murder at Alexandria, which was met with a letter of rebuke from the emperor, Julian's only response was to depose the governor of the province (Soz., *HE* 5.9).

In addition to a change in imperial policies towards the newly favoured religion of the empire, one of the major goals of Julian was to bring about the revival of paganism in the urban centres of the east. The heart of his programme was expressed in the ancient Greek ideal of *paideia*, which included all the elements of high culture from literature, art, drama, music and the art of government, to science, philosophy and religion. Julian perceived Greek *paideia* to be a synthesis of the outstanding

attributes of Hellenism combined with *Romanitas*, which collectively revealed salvation to humanity and civilization to the world because it had been the product of divine revelation.[25] While its spiritual legacy was soteriological and revelatory, in a political and civic sense it was the only hope for the restoration of the former greatness of the empire which began to diminish with the rise of the Galilean superstition.[26] In light of this conviction to resurrect the old cults of the cities, it should not surprise us that Julian set out to reorganize paganism, often in the midst of pagan apathy towards the gods (Julian, *Ep.* 20), according to the structure and practices of the church. For example, high priests were appointed over areas with the authority to appoint priests in every city and assign them various responsibilities (*Ep.* 20). Writing to Arsacius, the high priest of Galatia, Julian demanded a higher ethical standard for all priests. They must not enter theatres, he advises, drink in taverns, nor involve themselves in disrespectable trade (*Ep.* 22). In another epistle he laments that the Galilean folly has 'overturned almost everything' (*Ep.* 22). After ordering a high priest to make provisions in every city to help the poor, he adds that the Galileans are helping not only their own poor, but 'ours' as well (*Ep.* 22). He commands priests to be benevolent towards humanity because this was the practice of the ancient Hellenic religion.[27]

Julian systematically continued to move against the Christians by the implementation of new legislation. The edict of 17 June 362, which forbade Christian teachers to teach classical literature, was considered a harsh measure even by the pagan historian Ammianus Marcellinus (25.4.20; Banchich 1993; Averil Cameron 1993: 4). The rescript issued later directed provincial magistrates to exclude Christians from educational employment (Julian, *Ep.* 36, after 17 June 362 at Antioch; Hardy 1968: 131). Julian defines the Galilean religion as a mental disease and emphasizes that literary culture has been revealed to civilization by the gods through, e.g. Homer, Hesiod, Demosthenes and Herodotus (*Ep.* 36). Christian theologians had for many years been using classical works to show how it served God's plan as a preparation for the definitive revelation in Christ. Julian's concept of *paideia*, based on the religious *mos maiorum* of ancient polytheism, affirmed the superiority of Graeco-Roman culture to the man-made myths of the Galileans. The edict therefore had a twofold purpose: it aimed at reviving Hellenism in the cities, and it was part of imperial policies related to Christianity which were becoming increasingly antagonistic.[28]

Julian moved his court to Antioch during July 362 to prepare for his Persian campaign that began in March of the following year (Amm. Marc. 22.9.15; Soz., *HE* 5.19). The emperor soon alienated the ruling classes because of his ascetic life, interest in reviving paganism in a Christianized metropolis, reluctance to support the chariot races and a serious conflict with the Antiochene *curia* concerning price-gauging at urban markets (Soc., *HE* 3.17; Athanassiadi 1992: 216; Simmons forthcoming 2017a). The latter was the main cause of discontent amongst the citizens of the city (Lib., *Or.* 15.8–19; Soc., *HE* 3.1). When the emperor arrived in the city, food shortages had already occurred. Libanius tells us that an edict reducing the price of food coincided with a severe drought. Vendors left the city, famine ensued accompanied by scarcity and the Antiochenes blamed the economic problems on Julian (Soc., *HE* 3.1; Soz., *HE* 5.19; *Lib., Or.* 15.8, 19, 21, 70; 18.195f., 148). Having now become unpopular, he was constantly ridiculed by the people, yet it was during this period that many of his extant works were written (Smith 1995: 7ff.). Within this situation of growing hostility, Julian's anti-Christian posture was reinforced. During the winter of 362–3, he was doing research for his *Contra Galilaeos*. According to Theodoret (*HE* 3.4), an edict was issued at this time which expelled Christians from the army. Whether this is true is unlikely, owing to the fact that since Diocletian the number of Christians in the military had increased (Simmons forthcoming 2017c), and Julian needed a large army for his Persian campaign. On 29 January 363, however, a number of Christians who served in the army were executed (Jones 1963: 24f.; Woods 1997). Other policies against the Christians were the edicts forbidding daytime funerals (Julian, *Ep.* 56), in a culture where pagan funerals occurred at night; and the support of pagan intellectuals in the east to revive the Imperial Cult by sacrificing to the emperor (Lib., *Or.* 15.36). Although scholars continue to debate the precise meaning of Julian's motives at this time, it is clear that the growing hostility towards the Christians

from June 362 to March 363, and the concomitant favouritism shown to pagans, strongly indicates a movement of imperial policies towards an increasingly anti-Christian programme. And this appears to have been a driving force in Julian's beginning at least with the death of Constantius II.[29]

Other significant events occurred while he resided at Antioch. Before launching the Persian campaign, the emperor consulted the oracle at Daphne located about six kilometres south-east of Antioch (Lieu 1986: 51–7). Desiring to restore the shrine's Castalian springs which were believed to possess prophetic powers, Julian invoked the deity, who ordered that the bodies buried nearby be removed to another place.[30] Julian interpreted this to mean that the remains of St. Babylas, bishop of Antioch who was martyred during the Decian persecution, and who was buried close to the shrine, must be relocated. On 22 October 362 the Temple of Apollo at Daphne, along with the cult statue, was destroyed by fire.[31] Accusing the Christians of starting the fire, Julian retaliated by ordering the great church in Antioch to be closed (Theod., *HE* 3.6). Fresh persecutions against the Christians began under the leadership of the emperor's uncle Julian (Lieu 1986: 51–7). According to Libanius (*Oratio* 18.157), in March 362 CE (that is, during the winter before his Persian campaign) and while he was at Pessinus, Julian wrote his *Hymn* (or *Oration*) *to the Mother of the Gods*, that is, to Cybele, an important goddess in that city (see Figure 60.3).

Under Iamblichus, Neoplatonism had evolved into a syncretistic system comprising metaphysics, ethics and Chaldaean theurgical rites (Simmons 1995: 216–303; 2015). This new religious philosophy was characterized by a strong belief in divine revelation (oracles) thought capable of giving to the recipient guidance for individuals and political leaders, wisdom in the affairs of life and even glimpses into the future. With respect to the history of religion in the ancient Mediterranean world, Julian the Apostate is very significant for our understanding of this mystical belief in 'personal prophecy'. pagan and Christian sources inform us that early in his life Julian became obsessed with an interest in augury, sorcery, enchantments, dreams and visions, divination, extispicy, oracles, soothsaying, necromancy, horoscopes, prodigies, zodiac signs, seeking out seers, all kinds of omens and many other prophetic 'signs' (Julian, *Ep.* 6; Lib., *Or.* 12.69; 13.14, 48f.; 15.53; Ephrem's *Hymns Against Julian*, passim). Indeed, he offers to students of ancient religions, particularly those interested in 'prophetic revelation', a gold mine of information. For example, Julian tells us that the foundation of the Roman Empire consists of the body of ancestral religious customs passed down from antiquity, the *mos maiorum*, which beginning in the Regal Age (753–510 BC) came about by divine revelation. Under king Numa great blessings occurred because the Sibyl and others experienced 'divine possession' and 'inspiration' and gave oracles for the city from Zeus (Julian, *C.Gal.* 194B; *Ep.* 20). By placing this concept of *Sacred History* in contradistinction with the Christian 'fulfilment from prophecy' argument, Julian aimed at dismantling a powerful weapon in traditional Christian apologetics to show that the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus was untenable (Julian, *C.Gal.* 106C, 138C). But it was not just an academic argument. Owing to his strong belief that prophecy was a 'blessed gift' from the gods (*C.Gal.* 106C), the extent to which it influenced both his personal affairs and, more importantly, his decisions as emperor should not be overlooked. Often prophecies, meaning here all means of acquiring important information from the gods, directly affected governmental appointments and military decisions (Amm. Marc. 22.12.6f.; Lib., *Or.* 18.180; Julian, *Ep.* 9). By prophecy Julian knew when people would die, including himself (Amm. Marc. 22.1.2; Soz., *HE* 5.1; Eunapius, *Vit. phil.* 475f.; Averil Cameron 1993: 91). Even though he alludes to the rare manifestation of the prophetic spirit in his own day, he stresses that it has altogether ceased amongst the Hebrews and Egyptians, and finds comfort in the 'sacred arts' of divination through which heaven can aid man now.[32] And if it was rare, oracular revelation did continue at a few temples of Apollo, and the incident at Daphne proves how zealously Julian sought out divine oracles.[33] Finally, Julian was significantly influenced by dreams and visions, and kept in his imperial entourage a group of experts who were adept at their interpretation (Amm. Marc. 23.3.3; 25.2.3f.; 25.3.9; Julian, *Ep.* 4).

Julian's keen interest in prophetic revelation may shed some light on the edict which he issued at Antioch, probably late 362, that ordered the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem (Simmons 2006).

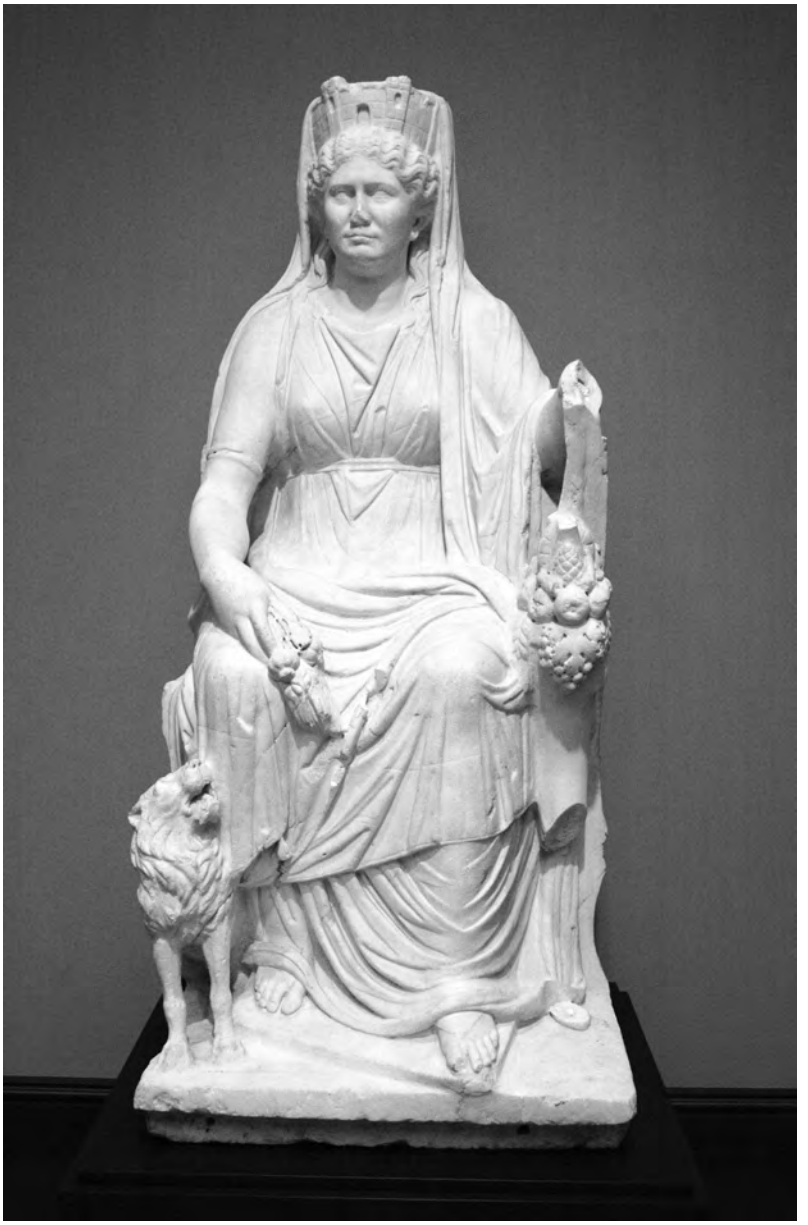

Figure 60.3 Statue of seated Cybele, with the portrait head of her priestess; now in the Getty Museum; Wikicommons by an unknown photographer

A former vice-prefect of Britain, Alypius, was appointed to supervise the project, but shortly after it began an earthquake and a fire brought about its termination (Amm. Marc. 23.1.2f.; Seaver 1978; Simmons 2006). Several reasons have been given for Julian's motives. First, he wanted to rebuild the Temple as part of his programme to revive animal sacrifices (Blanchetière 1980; Athanassiadi 1992: 164). Second, it was part of his anti-Christian policies (Klein 1986: 287; Smith 1995: 193). Finally, Julian wanted to disprove Christ's prophecy of Matt. 24:2, Mark 13:2 and Luke 21:6 which predicted the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (Browning 1976: 176; Bowersock 1978: 89f.; Potter 1994: 171; Simmons 2006). One other motive that has recently been investigated

(Simmons 2006) concerns an oracle, undoubtedly derived from Porphyry's *Philosophia ex oraculis*, and quoted by Augustine in the *De Civitate Dei*:

> For when they saw that it could not be destroyed by all those many great persecutions but rather increased amazingly because of them, they thought up some Greek verses or other, as if they were the outpouring of a divine oracle in reply to someone consulting it; in them they make Christ blameless, to be sure, of this charge of sacrilege (so to call it), but explain that Peter contrived by sorcery that the name of Christ should be worshipped for three hundred and sixty-five years, and then after the completion of that number of years it should immediately come to an end.
>
> (Civ. Dei *18.53)*

The important elements of this prophecy are (1) a pagan god gives 'prophetic revelation'; (2) it is a futuristic prophecy containing a specific date; (3) it predicts the termination of Christianity exactly 365 years after Christ began to be worshipped. At least five data strongly suggest that the oracle derives from Porphyry's *Philosophia ex oraculis*: (1) the oracle was in a collection of Greek verses; (2) oracular revelation was given after someone inquired about Christianity; (3) the many 'Great Persecutions' are now in the past; (4) Christ is not criticized; and (5) Peter practised sorcery. During the winter of 362–3, Julian was doing research for the *C. Gal.* (Lib., *Or.* 18.178) which he finished before March 363. While writing the work, it is highly possible that Porphyry's anti-Christian works were consulted, and the oracle cited above was discovered. Realizing that he could be instrumental in the fulfilment of the prophecy, Julian called a conference with Jewish officials which resulted in issuing the Edict on Rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem (Simmons 2006). Moreover, he will have perceived both the fulfilment of the prophecy and the rebuilding of the Temple as interrelated events that could bring about the realization of his dream to revive Hellenism. As a fervent anti-Christian, he will have viewed the rebuilt Temple as a historical confirmation of Porphyry's oracle and the crowning event of his imperial career. A comforting thought in his twilight years would have been that the gods used him to fulfil the prophecy given by a prominent Neoplatonic philosopher, and the greatest anti-Christian author in antiquity, about the demise of a religion for which they possess a mutual hatred (Simmons 2006). We may also give the following data to support this interpretation:

1. Even by pagan accounts Julian was very superstitious and possessed a fanatical interest in oracles.
2. Julian performed many kinds of ritual regularly in order to look into the future.
3. Julian personally believed in oracular (and other kinds of) revelation and depended on it for guidance in his affairs.
4. Porphyry wrote *c.* 50–60 years before Julian and was still considered the most famous anti-Christian writer of the period. His books were in circulation, and it would be unreasonable to think that he did not have a significant influence on Julian.[34]
5. The discovery of the '365-year oracle' may have resulted from the acquisition of George of Alexandria's library which Julian was keenly interested in procuring as early as July 362.[35] The oracle was most probably in the *Philosophia ex oraculis*, and its discovery was the main stimulus for the conference with the Jews. In *Ep.* 51, written in late 362, Julian refers to his plans to rebuild the Temple *after* his Persian campaign. The discovery of the Porphyrian oracle changed his mind to start the project *before* the campaign began in March 363.
6. Ammianus Marcellinus (23.1.2) informs us that Julian was eager to extend the memory of his reign by great works, and he planned *at great cost* to restore the Temple in Jerusalem. He also says that he entrusted the *speedy* performance of the work to Alypius. Why speedy? What made him change his mind not only about the timing of the project, but also what made him between

July 362 and the following winter (December-February 363) feel compelled to do it hurriedly? The answer could very well be that he desired to see the fulfilment of the prophecy *in his lifetime before the 365 years were terminated*.

7 From an early age, Julian was familiar with Christian scripture, including the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 which give Jesus' prophecy about the Temple. The Porphyrian oracle was perceived as divine inspiration for the restoration of the Temple and retribution for Jesus' false prediction.

8 Julian constantly relied upon Neoplatonic philosophers for prophetic wisdom, often in direct opposition to the traditional practices of his soothsayers.[36] Ephrem (*Hymn against Julian* 4.22) describes Julian's attempts to rebuild the Temple as the *divination of a madman*. This may indeed imply that the Porphyrian oracle motivated him. 'Divination' was a word used in the preface of the *Phil. orac.* to explain the salvific benefits that Porphyry's readers would receive (see Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 4.6f.).

9 Ephrem the Syrian is one of the earliest Christian writers to refer to Julian's Temple restoration, but he never mentions the Olivet discourse passages. He uses the *Book of Daniel* to argue from prophecy that the Temple would not be rebuilt. Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, also uses Daniel's prophecy, which he says was confirmed by Christ, to show that the Temple would not be rebuilt. Porphyry's interpretation of Daniel in the *Contra Christianos*, combined with the 365-year oracle, motivated Julian to begin the project when he did. Both were integral to his desire to disprove Jesus' prophecy. Ephrem calls Julian the 'king of Greece' (Alexander) who 'rejected Daniel' and provoked God to anger. We have seen that Porphyry argued that Daniel was not a true prophecy, but simply a historical book.

10 Socrates (*HE* 3.23) says that both Porphyry and Julian were scoffers at those they disliked (the Christians), referring to Porphyry's as Julian's anti-Christian polemics.

11 Julian admits that the manifestation of the prophetic spirit in his day was rare. Yet he sought oracles for guidance and to know the future. He kept several collections of books on the proper interpretation of prophetic revelation in a chest which he took with him even while on campaign. One book was a *Book of Oracles*. He also consulted the *Sibylline Books* in Rome. We hear of books on the interpretation of lightning, Tarquitian books *On Signs from Heaven*, and Etruscan books *On War* for the precise interpretation of omens before battle. If these were consulted regularly, and he had a preference for Neoplatonic oracles, how much more would he confide in the collection of oracles (*Phil. orac.*) compiled by a renowned anti-Christian Neoplatonist (Porphyry)?[37]

12 Julian strongly believed that 'signs' in the form of concrete historical events must follow a prophecy in order to confirm its authenticity (Simmons 2006):

> It is not possible to behold the truth from speech alone, but some clear sign must follow on what has been said that will guarantee the prophecy that has been made concerning the future.
>
> *(*C.Gal. *358E)*

Ammianus tells us that Julian was an expert in the discernment of such prophetic signs (21.1.6; also 22.1.2; 23.3.6f.; 23.5.8f.; Simmons 2006 and forthcoming 2017a), and the emperor wrote to Libanius on 10 March 363 that at the beginning of the Persian campaign Zeus showed many favourable signs from heaven (*Ep.* 58). Because he received oracles and accompanying signs, Libanius says that Julian carried out his plans 'with the end already in full view' (*Or.* 13.49). A project as vast as rebuilding the Temple presupposes two known facts about Julian's belief in prophetic revelation. First, an oracle motivated him to restore the Temple. Second, the rebuilt Temple could be a concrete sign to prove that Jesus' prophecy about the Temple was false, and Porphyry's oracle about Christianity's termination 365 years after Jesus began to be worshipped was true.

The date is arguably important. Augustine, who of course believed in the deity of Christ, dates the beginning of his worship at Pentecost (*Civ. Dei* 18.54) *c.* 29 CE in the consulship of the two Gemini. He calculates that the 365 years ended on the Ides of May in the consulship of Honorius and Eutychianus in 398. The next year (18 March 399) officials in Carthage demolished pagan temples and images. Augustine then gives a concrete 'sign' that the prophecy was false. In the 30 years since that day, he says, Christianity has increased, and adds:

> Who does not see how much the worship of the name of Christ had grown during the period of nearly thirty years from then to the present, especially after many of those became Christians who had been held back from the faith by that supposedly true prophecy, which they now saw, after the completion of the specified number of years, to be foolish and ridiculous?
>
> *(*Civ. Dei *18.54)*

This demonstrates clearly that many pagans during Augustine's day strongly believed in Porphyry's prophecy.

In 363 Julian had about two years left for the 'sign' confirming Porphyry's prophecy to occur, provided that he dated the beginning of Christianity at the birth of Christ. Porphyry's oracle declared that Christianity would expire *immediately* 365 years from the worship of Christ. Julian knew that according to the Gospel of Matthew, this began in Bethlehem when the Magi brought presents to the stable. Julian's insistence on calling Jesus the Galilean is not so much because he denied the Christians any claim to universality (Athanassiadi 1992: 161, n. 2) as it was to stress the mere humanity of Jesus. Yet if Julian dated the beginning of the worship of Jesus at Pentecost as Augustine did, he could still look forward to seeing the fulfilment of Porphyry's prophecy in his lifetime, because in 394 CE (Augustine's calculations were inaccurate) he would have been 63. Even if he had not lived to see the Temple completed, he would have been given credit for its ultimate construction. Ammianus' remark that Julian was compelled to move forward hurriedly with the project is best understood as a decision that was motivated by his belief in the fulfilment of the Porphyrian oracle within two years from the time he finished the *Contra Galilaeos*. We may conclude that he wrote the *C.Gal.* during the winter of 362–3 in his palace during the night while dealing with growing discontent in Antioch, preparing for the Persian campaign and meeting with Jewish officials concerning the rebuilding of the Temple. He had sent two letters months before to Alexandria demanding that books from George's library be sent to him immediately. This is one possible source of Porphyry's works on philosophy, which may have included polemical writings. It is logical to assume that the emperor consulted the *Contra Christianos* and *Phil. orac.* while writing the *C.Gal.*, and he may have discovered the prophecy that predicted the termination of Christianity 365 years after its beginning while reading the *Phil. orac.* This motivated him to convene a speedy meeting with Jewish officials to initiate work on the Temple project, which helps us to understand why he moved the date for the beginning of the construction from *after* to *before* the Persian campaign, and why he moved forward with it hurriedly (Simmons 2006).

In March 363 Julian set out for his Persian campaign against the advice of his best soothsayers who admonished him both before and during the invasion that the gods did not favour the enterprise (Lib., *Or.* 12.76; Soc., *HE* 3.19ff.; Amm. Marc. 23.2.7; 23.5.11). As we have noted, the emperor increasingly relied on prophetic guidance, especially oracles, provided by Neoplatonic philosophers like Maximus of Ephesus (Rufinus, *HE* 1.36; Amm. Marc. 22.12.6f.; Ephrem, *Hymn against Julian* 2.8; Soc., *HE* 3.21). Ammianus Marcellinus describes many 'signs' which occurred during the invasion to prove the divine disfavour expressed by the soothsayers (23.5.10; 23.3.6f.; 23.5.4f.; 23.5.12ff.; 25.2.7f.). After an attempt to take Ctesiphon (May 363) failed, Julian ordered a retreat as Shapur II's army was approaching, and on 26 June 363 he was fatally wounded at the age of 32 while leading a counter-attack against the Persians. He died later in the evening in his tent (Amm. Marc. 25.3.1–23;

Figure 60.4 Sassanian relief at Taq-e Bostan, Iran of Mithra, Shapur II and Ahura Mazda standing above the body of the defeated Julian; Wikicommons

Lib., *Or.* 17.23; Soc., *HE* 3.21; Soz., *HE* 6.1), and his body was taken to Tarsus where it was given a customary imperial burial. This did not stop the Sassanian king Ardashir II commissioning a stone relief for his investiture that shows Mithra, Shapur II and Ahura Mazda standing above a defeated Julian (Figure 60.4). The Christian Jovian became the next emperor (Amm. Marc. 25.5.4–9).[38]

Themes of the *Contra Galilaeos*

As we have seen, during the winter of 362–3, Julian hurriedly wrote the *C.Gal.* in the midst of economic problems in Antioch, planning the Persian campaign and beginning the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem (Lib., *Or.* 18.178; Masaracchia 1986; Athanassiadi 1992: 362f.; Smith 1995: 190). The text of the *C.Gal.* is lost, though parts of the first book of an original three are preserved in Cyril of Alexandria's refutation written in the 430s (Masaracchia 1986). Lacking in original thought and not profoundly intellectual, the *C.Gal.* is described by Libanius as a work that was produced without any attention to elegance (18.178). Julian often irritates his readers by jumping from one subject to another, then back again to his original theme (*C.Gal.* 213B–C; 218A–B). He sometimes promises that he will cover a subject later in his treatise, then proceed to do it (213A). It is indeed a disappointing work, often repetitive, and according to one scholar, it demonstrates the emperor's inability to distinguish the fundamental from the trivial (Malley 1978). Julian possessed neither the analytical, theological, historical or linguistic expertise of Porphyry, nor the propriety and objectivity of Celsus. The whole work would have been well served by an efficient editorial revision.

Early in Book I Julian informs us about the purpose of writing the *C.Gal.*:

> [t]o set forth to all mankind the reasons by which I was convinced that the fabrication of the Galileans is a fiction of men composed by wickedness.
>
> *(*C.Gal. *39A: Wright)*

He says further that the Christian uses that part of the soul that loves childish fables to induce men to believe that a 'monstruous tale' is true (39B). Christians wail over the corpse of a Jew because they

have abandoned the ever-living gods of the Romans. Their religion is absurd and their doctrines are not divine (39B; 138C; 194D; 197C; 206A; 229D). The *C.Gal.* appears to have been written in association with Julian's attempt to revive Hellenism in the eastern urban centres of the empire with the objective of demonstrating the superiority of Greek *paideia* to Christian doctrine, and showing that the Christians lacked the support of ancestral religious customs. To achieve this goal, Julian developed six major themes in the *C.Gal.* which we will now address.[39]

Jesus

The purpose of Julian's criticism of Jesus is to show that he was not God, and he reinforces his argument first by proving the novelty of Christianity. The Galileans, he asserts, have abandoned both Hellenism and the ancestral teachings of the Jews. Just yesterday Jesus' doctrine appeared, and it has done nothing to ameliorate the urban culture of the empire (*Ep.* 47; *C.Gal.* 106C; 194D; 197C; 201E; 238A). Christianity is an enormous pretension (116A), primarily because the Christians have misinterpreted the Hebrew scriptures. Jesus was never recognized by God in the Old Testament as his 'Son' (159E). Of all the New Testament writers, it was only John who made up the 'evil doctrine' of the divinity of Christ (335B). Anyway, even the Jews themselves rejected Jesus, who brought an infectious disease to the world and actually opposed God's will for mankind to worship many gods (159E; Simmons forthcoming 2017a). The Logos Doctrine of Johannine theology, moreover, is contradictory: if Jesus is indeed God, why does John say: 'No man has ever seen God at any time' (333D)? Because the Christian teaching about Jesus is a myth, he cannot therefore in any way save mankind (Greenwood 2014c). Mankind has prospered much more from the worship of such deities as Helios (*Ep.* 47; 55; Ugenti 1992: 395–402; Smith 1995: 197–204; Simmons forthcoming 2017a).

Julian also criticizes the teachings and works of Jesus. For example, to reinforce his claim that Hellenism is superior to Christianity because the latter has abandoned its ancestral customs, Julian mocks the assertion of Jesus that the Jews are God's 'Chosen people' (106B). Since Jesus neither lived a pure life, nor did he teach it to his disciples (205E), his teachings recorded in the gospels would cause the disintegration of the Roman empire if everyone practised them (*C.Gal. Frag.* 5). Hence the Galilean man-made myth is detested by the gods and will poison Hellenism, which is the true salvation of the world (*Ep.* 147; Malley 1978: 12). Jesus' works are equally condemned. To prove that Jesus was not God, Julian develops further the argument of Celsus which attributed Jesus' miraculous power to the operation of magic by maintaining that Moses, the prophets, Jesus and his disciples surpass all the magicians and charlatans of every place and period in history (100A). Julian thus greatly minimizes the soteriological value of Jesus' works:

> Yet Jesus, who won over the least worthy of you . . . accomplished nothing worth hearing of, unless anyone things that to heal crooked and blind men and to exorcise those who were possessed by evil demons in the villages of Bethsaida and Bethany can be classed as a mighty achievement.
>
> *(191E)*

If Jesus did not offer any lasting benefits to his own people, who in the end rejected him, why should an erudite person not accept Hellenism which has been the fount of many divine blessings since ancient times?[40]

As we have already noted above, a classic theme in anti-Christian polemics was the rejection of the apologists' 'proof from prophecy' argument. Julian continued this tradition, and because of his sound knowledge of scripture, he was able to attack it from several perspectives. The major point he makes is that the Old Testament Messianic prophecies have been misconstrued by the Christians, who falsely applied them to Jesus. Nowhere in the Pentateuch, he argues, did Moses predict a Messiah who would be 'God born from God'. Moses taught the Hebrews to worship one

God, not two (262B–C, E; 276E; 290C–D; 291A). Christian biblical theologians have eisegeted Old Testament prophecies which have resulted in worshipping Jesus as a false God. Besides, the Mosaic prophecies often apply to king David, and Isaiah 7.14 did not predict the virgin birth of a God (253B–E; 261E; 262B–D). Julian also asserts that the mythological tritheism expressed in the baptismal formula given by Jesus in Matthew 28.14 clearly contradicts the Mosaic monotheism of the Pentateuch (291A). Other examples of the New Testament doctrines that came about by the corruption of the original teaching of Moses and the prophets are the Incarnation; the deity, passion and resurrection of Christ; the Pauline concept of Christ as the 'end of the Law'; the Marian doctrine of *Theotokos*; and the cult of the martyrs which, to the emperor, was tantamount to witchcraft and violates Old and New Testament teaching (320B–C; 327A–C; 335D; 339A–C; 262D; 276E–277A).

God

To Julian, Christian teaching about God is absurd and trivial, and it lacks the superior rationalism of Greek philosophy (160E). Though some scholars have interpreted Julian's thought as based on a concept of natural theology which presupposes an innate knowledge of God, this does not, as we have already seen, rule out any need for divine revelation (52B–C; Smith 1995: 192f.). Innate knowledge provided a general epistemology concerning the nature of the divine and helped to answer a number of teleological questions about the relationship between providence and the natural world. Revelation, whether manifested by oracles, Chaldean-Neoplatonic theurgy, soothsaying or extispicy, made the divine world and its otherwise inaccessible, mysterious and secret knowledge relevant and accessible to the inquirer. The recipient of the revelation possessed the confidence that the personal decisions of his daily life were influenced and protected by supernatural guidance. 'Personal religion' of this kind was a symptom of the age; it affected pagans and Christians alike, permeated all classes in society, made contact with the gods possible, and it often degenerated into absurd practices. Neoplatonism supplied Julian with much of the conceptual basis of the cosmos (69C). Hence God does not increase or decrease, he is immutable, free from decay and generation. He is pure, immortal, eternal and transcendent (69C). As an intellectual, Julian rejected the Graeco-Roman myths which depicted, e.g. Kronos eating his children and Zeus having sex with his mother (44A–B). Even more so will he call Hebrew myths absolutely incredible (75A; Meredith 1980: 1143), and the Judaeo-Christian God of scripture gave him plenty of ammunition for the *Contra Galilaeos*. He specifically criticizes the particularity of the Hebrew God which, he argues, prevents Christianity from being a truly universal religion (100C; Simmons 2015, forthcoming 2017a). In contradistinction to the Platonic doctrine of divine impassibility, Julian excoriates the irrational nature of the Christian God which is inferior even to the mildness of Lycurgus, the forbearance of Solon and the benevolence of the Romans (168C; 171D)., The God of scripture possesses weaknesses of character normally condemned in humans. He constantly expresses jealousy, anger, resentment and other features inconsistent with divinity, which prove his indisputable irrationality (106E; 152B–D; 155C–D; 160D; 161A). The Hebrew God is best understood as one of the many national deities to whom the higher power has delegated responsibilities for their particular territories. The incorporation of the Hebrew God into his philosophical system will have benefitted his attempt to revive Hellenism in the urban centres of the east in at least four ways. First, he was able to defend traditional polytheism and at the same time give a coherent explanation for the diversity of religious culture. Second, he could attempt to explain the tension between monotheism and polytheism based on a theology of the cosmos which was characterized by a Neoplatonic understanding of a hierarchy of Being. Third, on a broader scale, he could see it as an impetus for the revival of Hellenism in the urban centres of the Eest. Finally, he could show that Christianity should be abandoned because it lacks the support of ancient ancestral customs (115D–E; 116A–B; 143B–C; 148B–C; 155E). The Christian doctrine of God is therefore pure nonsense (155E).

Creation

Julian quotes Plato's *Timaeus* 30B to prove that Platonic cosmology is superior to the biblical account of creation found in *Genesis* 1–2 (57B–C). The cosmos exists as a living creature with a soul and intelligence (57C–D). Exegeting *Tim.* 41A–C, Julian maintains that the visible celestial planets and stars are likenesses of the invisible gods (65B–C). The immortal part of humans was given by the Demiurge as the rational soul, and the rest of the process of Becoming consisted of weaving mortality and immortality (65D). In *Genesis* Moses fails to inform us of the immediate creator of the universe (66A). Julian follows Plato by saying that God is not the creator of material things, but only disposes of pre-existing matter (49C–D). The transcendent God who is the principle of ultimate reality is at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of Being, and from him emanates all other ontological levels of reality.

As the creator of mortal beings and material reality, the God of *Genesis* was perceived by pagan philosophers as a being demoted in the metaphysical realm, and because of this Julian specifically castigates the creation stories in *Genesis* 1–2. For instance, on the creation of Eve, he asks whether God did not know that she would be a misfortune to Adam (75B). He further asks why God denied to humans the power to distinguish between good and evil (89A). To Julian this is a ludicrous myth for four reasons. First, it depicts God as being ignorant that the woman became a deceiver. Second, God refused something beneficial for Adam and Eve: the knowledge of good and evil. Third, God was jealous about the possibility of humans eating from the tree. Finally, God became envious when Adam and Eve knew good and evil, and expelled them from the garden (75B; 89A; 93E; 94A). Such concepts as sin, human free will and choice were abhorrent to a Neoplatonist who believed that all levels of material reality are immutably ordered by providence for a world which is essentially eternal.

Criticism of scripture

Julian is similar to Porphyry in that both possessed a sound knowledge of scripture and used it against the Christians (Simmons 1995, 2006, 2015, forthcoming 2017a, forthcoming 2017d). To ascertain the nature of his knowledge, we may first observe scriptural passages cited or alluded to in Julian's works, and most of these occur in the *C. Gal.* Fifty-seven are from the Old Testament and 41 from the New.[41] Forty-four of the Old Testament passages come from the Pentateuch: (16) Genesis, (11) Exodus, (9) Deuteronomy, (5) Leviticus, (3) Numbers; 13 derive from other books: (2) I Samuel, (3) I Kings, (1) II Kings, (5) Isaiah, (1) Psalms, (1) Hosea. Of the New Testament passages, there are 28 from the evangelists: (13) Matthew, (5) Matthew or another gospel; (4) Luke, (1) Mark, (1) Mark or Luke; (4) John; and from the other books: (6) Acts; (11) Pauline epistles; (1) Hebrews. Of the New Testament figures named we have Jesus (24 occurrences), John (8), Matthew (7), Mark (4), Luke (4) and Paul (13).[42] The function of scripture in the polemics of Julian was probably influenced by Porphyry, and we may give four premises of his argument (Meredith 1980: 1147):

1. Christians have abandoned Hebrew traditions and have misinterpreted the Old Testament (238B; *Ep.* 47).
2. Even if one trained a child in the scriptures from a young age, his character would not be any better than that of a slave (230A–235B). Scripture does not make one wiser, braver, or better than one was before he read it (230A). It is not therefore for the intelligent, nor for those seeking wisdom (229D).
3. Greek writings, which Christians often ascribe to the Devil, enable people to acquire courage, wisdom, and justice. They actually produce virtue in those not endowed with the natural ability to apprehend them. To the person so endowed, he becomes a gift of the gods to civilization (229D; 230A–B).
4. Christians use Greek learning in their theology. If their scripture is sufficient, why do they nibble at Greek literature (229C)?

Christian doctrine and practice

The apostate emperor believed that the church is under a double curse because it has abandoned both the polytheism of the Greeks and the traditions of its Hebrew fathers (238A–B). Although Julian admits that he is not a Jew, he expresses respect for the God of Abraham and Isaac, and argues that the Christians rebelled against the Mosaic Law. For example, they do not keep the Passover, practise circumcision, sacrifice animals or honour the food laws of the Covenant (314C; 343C; 351A; 354A–B). Furthermore, the Galileans have not accepted a single admirable teaching from the Greeks or the Hebrews (43A), and the only thing that the latter have in common with the Christians is the rejection of polytheism (238C–D). This is very unfortunate, he claims, because the gods have sent many lawgivers to the Greeks who were superior to Moses (141D). At least the Christians would be following some sort of law if they had not abandoned Hebrew customs, although it is harsh and inferior to the humane laws of the Romans (202A), and in reality they have transgressed all the commandments that God gave Moses (351B; 42E–43A; 99E; 141C–D; 218B; 253A–B; 254B; *Ep*. 20).

In conjunction with this theme of the Christian abandonment of the truth Julian develops a protean attack upon the past and contemporary followers of Jesus. He says, probably following Celsus, that only the very base people of society like shopkeepers, slaves, maidservants and dancers become Christians (206A; 238D–E; 245A–C; 191D–E; *Ep*. 55). Christians are misguided and foolish, wicked and arrogant (194C; 229C; 230A; 238B). Julian focuses on the early leaders of the Apostolic Age such as Peter (314D–E) and Paul (106B). For example, he maintains that Paul's teaching is full of contradictions, and his concept of Christian universalism is ridiculous. After quoting Rom. 2:29 and Gal. 3:28, he asks why did God neglect most of humanity for thousands of years, who in ignorance served idols, but only recently came to a small tribe in an isolated part of Palestine. If he is indeed the God of all alike, as Paul teaches, why did he neglect the Greeks (106D)?

Julian's criticism of Christianity often includes contemporary practices in the church. Calling Christians the most depraved of all people, for instance, he mocks those believers who make the sign of the cross and 'hiss at demons' (*Ep*. 19; Bolton 1968). Why should they adore the wood of the cross, he asks, but refuse to revere the shield that providentially fell from the sky during Numa's reign (194C)? The cult of the martyrs is based on witchcraft, it has caused the worship of many corpses and it disobeys Jesus' teaching recorded in Matt. 23:27 (*Ep*. 41; *C.Gal*. 201E; 202A; 224E; 327B; 335B–C; 340A). Christian worship is maligned as impure, unholy, superstitious, an infectious disease and atheistic (*Epp*. 20 and 47; *C.Gal*. 43B; 202A). He uses Nicene Logos theology against the Semi-Arians to prove that because of their disagreement over doctrines Christians certainly cannot possess the truth (206A). The rite of baptism is supposed to 'wash' sin away according to 1 Cor. 6:9–11, but in fact Julian says it is not conducive to the reformation of character (245D). The new revelation from God claimed by the Galileans is rejected because Moses made it clear the Old Testament Law is for all time (319D–E; *Ep* 47; *C.Gal*. *Frag*. 1). Indeed, Christians have not even remained faithful to Apostolic doctrines, and evidence of this is the Johnannine notion that Jesus is God (327A).

The superiority of Greek paideia

Julian's programme to revive Hellenism in the eastern urban centres of the Roman empire[43] was predominantly motivated by the unswerving personal conviction that Greek *paideia* was a gift of the gods which had preserved civilization, caused the development of high culture and blessed humanity with true salvation (Criscuolo 1986; Alan Cameron 1993: 25–9; Greenwood 2014a; Simmons forthcoming 2017a). This latter point – the soteriological implications of Julian's policy – has not been given the attention it deserves. For example, Julian was aware that some of the success of Christianity during its 300 years was attributable at least partly to the church's claim to a unique revelation from God (Ugenti 1992: 393), the application of the Hebrew concept of the 'Chosen People' to its own doctrine and the belief that it was the only truly universal religion (Couloubaritis 1995; cf. Simmons

2015, forthcoming 2017a). To confront these notions, Julian stresses the sacred origin of Rome beginning with the Regal Period (753–510 BCE). Zeus brought about the birth of Rome and her great empire by setting over her Numa, the great philosopher-king who communed with the gods in pure thought and was inspired by divine oracles given by the Sibyl (194B–C; see Fouquet 1981: 196; Wallace-Hadrill 1981; Scott 1987: 345; Simmons forthcoming 2017a).

Julian builds on this conceptual foundation in a number of ways. We may first mention his conviction that Greek literature is far superior to Christian scripture, and educated Christian writers have borrowed much from it (171D; 229C). He also contrasts the Greek gods with the Hebrew God. Relying on Platonic soteriology, he says that men should not imitate the God of scripture, if indeed salvation is based on imitating God, the contemplation of the intelligibles and freedom from passion, because this God often expresses anger, jealousy, wrath, resentment and grief (171E). Jews and gentiles are in agreement on many doctrines except monotheism, and actually Solomon, who was the wisest of the Hebrews, practised polytheism (141C–D; 171E; 176A–B; 224E; 306A–B). It must be emphasized here that for Julian, 'gods' does not refer to the deities of the Greek myths, but rather to Helios, Asclepius and others which have been given a philosophical reinterpretation. Because they have a superior aptitude for the mysteries and theology, the wise men of the Greeks have given civilization a more noble concept of deity than that espoused by the Hebrews. Plato was more worthy than Moses of communion with God, the Greeks had an aptitude for theology, and therefore the Hebrews – and even much more the Christians – do not have a legitimate claim to a 'unique revelation' or to the status of the 'Chosen People of God' (49A–B; 171D; 176A–B; *Epp.* 3 and 36).

His concept of Greek *paideia* is not, however, restricted to religion, but rather encompasses every facet of Graeco-Roman civilization. In every area of the arts and sciences Greek learning greatly surpasses that of the Hebrews, and he gives as examples law, government, military science, medicine, philosophy, cosmology, astronomy, mathematics, music and, of course, theology (178A–B; 190C; 222A; 224C–D; 235C). Finally, Julian strikes at the central message of Christianity, the doctrine of Christ the saviour of the world, by referring to the 'greatest gift of the gods', the saving deity Asclepius. Salvific theophanies of this god have been numerous in history. He has descended to earth as a man and visited Epidaurus, Pergamum, Rome and many other cities. His salvation is even now universally available to all throughout the empire, and the benefits he gives to his worshippers far exceed the paltry number of miracles performed by the Galilean years ago in a dark corner of Palestine. Asclepius has healed many sick bodies, trained and educated many souls, and his oracles have been found everywhere on earth. Julian himself testifies that the god healed him of illnesses by prescribing remedies, and he will grant eternal salvation in the next life. He concludes that as a saving and healing deity, Asclepius is far superior to Jesus (200A–B; 235B–D).

Notes

1 See the magisterial study by Elm (2012) for Julian's cultural *Sitz im Leben*.

2 See Libanius, *Oration* 18.8 and Simmons (forthcoming 2017a and forthcoming 2017b). The many writers who have analysed the biography of Julian include Browning (1976), Bowersock (1978), Athanassiadi (1992), Smith (1995), Tougher (2007) and Von Nesselrath (2013). Vidal (1964) is an impressive novelistic account.

3 Libanius, *Or.* 13.8; 18.10f.; Socrates, *HE* 3.1. Cf. Bowersock (1978: 23f.) and Smith (1995: 2, 23–48).

4 Libanius, *Or.* 12.3, 80; 13.13 (very religious); 12.94; 18.30 (studious); 12.95 (ascetic); Julian, *Ep.* 60 (sensitive to human pain); *Ep.* 23 (personal library); Amm. Marc. 25.4.1–3 (sexually pure after his wife's death); 25.4.5f. (moderation in eating and drinking); 25.4.7 (his wisdom); 25.4.8–14 (political and military skills); 25.4.16 (inconsistent); 25.4.17 (talkative and superstitious); Soc., *HE* 3.1 (self-controlled). Ammianus Marcellinus (24.4.27) says that after a Roman victory during the Persian campaign, Julian would not so much as look at the young virgins taken captive, even though Persian girls were known for their beauty. See also, in general, Browning (1976: 42); Bowersock (1978: 12–20) and Smith (1995: 7). Bouffartigue (1989) tries unconvincingly to give a psychological sketch of Julian, especially concerning his 'paranoia'. On his love of applause, see Amm. Marc. 25.4.18.

5 See Festugière (1957) and Smith (1995: 2). For this formative period, see Browning (1976: 40f.); Athanassiadi (1977); Bowersock (1978: 25); Demarolle (1986); Klein (1986); Gauthier (1987); Buck (1990) and Bouffartigue (1992: 13–49).

6 Eunapius, *Vit. phil.* 473. Sozomen, *HE* 5.2 says that Julian was brought up in the knowledge of the scriptures.

7 On being a reader, see Soc., *HE* 3.1; Theodoret, *HE* 3.1. I find no reason to doubt that Julian was a sincere Christian in his early life. See Amm. Marc. 21.2.3f.; Ephrem, *Hymn against Julian* 1.14; Lib., *Or.* 13.12; Soc., *HE* 3.1; Sozomen, *HE* 5.1; Theodoret, *HE* 3.1; Vogt (1963); Masaracchia (1990: 9) and Smith (1995: 182–9).

8 E.g. Ephrem, *Hymn against Julian* 1.1. For Ephrem, see Lieu (1986). Drinkwater (1983: 355) believes Julian was a Christian in outward appearance. For Macellum see, e.g. Sozomen, *HE* 5.2; Browning (1976: 40); Smith (1995: 2); Henck (1999–2000); Elm (2012) and Simmons (forthcoming 2017a). Bidez (1930) remains useful.

9 Cf. Soz., *HE* 5.2; Elm (2012: 105f.). For Julian's education, see Lacombrade (1960).

10 *Ep.* 2, *To Priscus*. Ephrem, *Hymn against Julian* 1.16 calls Julian a 'Chaldaean'. For the influence of Iamblichus, see Alonso-Nuñez (1973); Balty (1974: 267ff.); Browning (1976: 51–62); Lewy (1978: 151, n. 313; and 270); Saffrey (1981); Sheppard (1982); Penati (1983); Marcone (1984); Shaw (1985); Dillon (1987), who gives an excellent survey of Iamblichean Neoplatonism; Finamore (1988); Scott (1987); Athanassiadi (1992: 136) and Ugenti (1992).

11 Eunapius, *Vit. phil.* 473 (Maximus was Julian's teacher); 475 (he used theurgy to make Hecate's statue smile); Soc., *HE* 3.1 (Maximus influenced Julian philosophically); Soz., *HE* 5.1 (asserts that Julian renounced Christianity and purged himself of baptism with pagan sacrifices); Lib., *Or.* 18.18 (Julian's conversion to Neoplatonism); Soz., *HE* 5.2 and Theod., *HE* 3.1 (Julian's initiation). On Julian's initiation/apostasy, see Athanassiadi (1977); Lewy (1978: 248); Fouquet (1981: 191–202); Gauthier (1987: 233) and Klein (1986: 278). Drinkwater (1983: 359) argues that from 351 Julian was not the centre of a pagan resistance movement, and Maximus 'stage-managed' his formal apostasy, views with which I disagree on evidence given earlier; cf. Averil Cameron 1993: 89; Smith 1995: 138. Athanassiadi (1977) argues for a conversion to Mithraism evidenced in Julian's *Hymn to King Helios*; for a different view, see Smith (1995: 139–62). On Mithraism, see Gordon (1972) and Ulansey (1989).

12 Lib., *Or.* 18.24–7, 29; Soc., *HE* 2.34; Soz., *HE* 3.1, 5.2; Smith (1995: 3); Browning (1976: 64ff.).

13 Julian, *Ep.* 26, early 362 from Constantinople for Julian's affection for St. Basil. Cf. Elm (2012: 23–6).

14 Lib., *Or.* 13.24–32; Eun., *Vit. phil.* 476; Soz., *HE* 5.1f.; Soc., *HE* 3.1; Browning (1976: 79–104); Bowersock (1978: 33–45); Elm (2012: 60–4).

15 See Lib., *Or.* 12.44ff.; 13.24–32 for the Strasbourg and Gaul campaign in general; also 18.55; 18.75–91; Smith (1995: 3).

16 Lib., *Or.* 12.65; 13.36; Amm. Marc. 21.7–16.6; 20.10f.; Soz., *HE* 5.1; Soc., *HE* 3.1; Theod., *HE* 3.1; Browning (1976: 120) and Smith (1995: 3).

17 Amm. Marc. 22.5.1–5; Lib., *Or.;* Soz., *HE* 5.3, on restoring priests' tax exemptions; Theod., *HE* 3.3; Soc., *HE* 3.1, 11; Eunapius, *Vit. phil.* 478; Lib., *Or.* 12.69; 17.9, 18; cf. Ephrem, *Hymn against Julian* 1.4, 2.1, 2.3, 2.27; Julian, *Ep.* 41, *To the Citizens of Bostra* (1 Aug. 362) and *Ep.* 47, *To the Alexandrians* (Nov. or Dec. 362). Also cf. Downey (1955; 1957); Arce (1975); Browning (1976: 178); Chuvin (1990: 43); Athanassiadi (1992: 181–9); Averil Cameron (1993: 93f.) and Bradbury (1995).

18 *Or.* 4.64. Cf. Bidez (1930: 310); Downey (1957: 98); Hardy (1968) and Malley (1978: 205).

19 Soc., *HE* 3.12; Lib., *Or. 18.122ff.*; Julian, *Ep.* 41, *To the Citizens of Bostra* from Antioch (1 Aug. 362); see also Hardy (1968: 136); Chuvin (1990: 43) and Woods (1997).

20 Soc., *HE* 3.11.1; Soz., *HE* 5.5; Theod., *HE* 3.2; Amm. Marc. 22.5.2.

21 Lib., *Or.* 18.126; Amm. Marc. 22.4.3; Soc., *HE* 3.1; Soz., *HE* 5.2, 5; Theod., *HE* 3.2; Lieu (1986: 45).

22 Soc., *HE* 3.12: Julian told Maris, bishop of Chalcedon, who was suffering from cataracts, that he was a blind old fool, and the Galilean God would never heal him.

23 For instance, note his special hatred for bishops like Athanasius: Theod., *HE* 3.5 (exile ordered); Soc., *HE* 3.14 (his flight); Julian, *Ep.* 24, *An Edict to the Alexandrians* (exiled); *Ep.* 46, *To Ecdicius Prefect of Egypt*, calling Athanasius 'the enemy of the gods' and ordering him to leave Egypt. For Julian's treatment of bishops, see Fowden (1978).

24 Theod., *HE* 3.3, reporting that the bones belonged to John the Baptist. Cf. Soc., *HE* 5.10.

25 Cf. Athanassiadi (1992: 122): Graeco-Roman culture is a product of divine revelation. This is evidence that Julian was interested in prophecy.

26 See Julian, *Ep.* 20, *To Theodorus the High Priest* (Spring 362), who is told to avoid innovations in religion and observe the customs inherited from their forefathers because the gods gave them to humanity.

27 See Julian, *Ep.* 22. The emperor caused a number of Christians to apostasize (Theod., *HE* 3.8). Another reform was forbidding the religious curse: priests should be men of prayer and blessing (*Ep.* 18). On his religious reforms, see Alonso-Nuñez (1973: 185) and the standard reference texts previously mentioned.

28 See Jones (1963: 30). I disagree with Hardy (1968: 138), who interprets the edicts as ancillary to Julian's political reforms and not as persecuting policy. Browning (1976: 174); Bowersock (1978: 83f.); Malley (1978: 27) and Meredith (1980: 1138) see them as at least partly anti-Christian. Cf. also Klein (1986: 47); Masaracchia (1990: 11) and Smith (1995: 199).

29 Cf. Bidez (1930: 266ff.): Julian desired to set up a pagan church centrally organized like that of the Christian which practised theurgy and Neoplatonism. For discussion, see Browning (1976: 134–43); Bowesock (1978), who reasonably argues that Julian was decidedly anti-Christian from the beginning; Athanassiadi (1992: 181); Bradbury (1995) and Smith (1995).

30 Amm. Marc. 22.12.7 and 22.13; Soc., *HE* 3.18; Theod., *HE* 3.6f.; Julian, *Ep*. 29; Lib., *Or*. 17.30. Cf. also Gregory (1983) with standard references.

31 Amm. Marc. 22.13.1 says the fire was caused by a pagan philosopher who left burning candles by the cult statue.

32 Cf. *C.Gal*. 198B-C; Eunapius, *Vit. phil*. 475f., says Julian prophesied the demise of Greek religion including the cessation of oracles in his lifetime.

33 In *C.Gal*. 235C he refers to the oracles of Asclepius found everywhere in the world, an exaggeration no doubt, but it contained some truth nonetheless.

34 For various views on the extent to which Porphyry influenced Julian, see, e.g. Simmons (2006, 2015, forthcoming 2017a, forthcoming 2017b); Smith (1995: 40); Potter (1994: 104f.); Masaracchia (1990: 15); Demarolle (1986: 40–6) and Chadwick (1985).

35 Julian, *Ep*. 23; *Ep*. 38; *Ep*. 51; and Simmons (2006). For George of Alexandria, see Soz., *HE* 3.2f.; 5.7. He was bishop of Alexandria and murdered by a mob in 361 CE.

36 Amm. Marc. 23.5.10f. relates that Etruscan soothsayers repeatedly told Julian not to invade Persia, but he preferred the authority of his Platonic advisers. Cf. Smith (1995: 8) and Simmons (2006 and forthcoming 2017a).

37 Amm. Marc. 22.12.6f.: Julian consulted many oracles; on the rarity of the prophetic spirit, see Julian, *C.Gal*. 198B–C; on the *Book of Oracles* (plausibly including the *Phil. orac.*) see Lib., *Or*. 18.118; on the *Sibylline Books* see Amm. Marc. 23.1.7; the *Books on Lightning*, Amm. Marc. 23.5.12ff.; the *Tarquitian Books*, Amm. Marc. 25.2.7f.; the *Books on War*, Amm. Marc. 23.5.10.

38 For Julian's campaign and death, see Browning (1976: 187–218); Bowersock (1978: 106–19); Lieu (1986: 92) and Simmons (forthcoming 2017a); cf. Griffith (1987: 244–7) on eastern Christians' interpretation on his death as God's ultimate triumph.

39 For some of the secondary literature on the *C.Gal*., see Courcelle (1948: 64f.); Bartelink (1957: 37–48); Bolton (1968: 496f.); Malley (1978); Meredith (1980: 1138–40); Demarolle (1986: 41f.); Gauthier (1987: 233); Masaracchia (1990: 20f.); Athanassiadi (1992: 161–9); Smith (1995: 190–207) and Simmons (forthcoming 2017a).

40 Cf. 213B; *Frag*. 2: Moses fasted 40 days and received the Law; Elijah fasted 40 days and saw God; what did Jesus receive after his 40 day fast? *Frag*. 3: ridiculing Jesus' temptation; *Frag*. 4: why did Jesus need help from an angel if he was God?

41 For an analysis of these data, see Bouffartigue (1992: 156–70). For Julian's scripture references, see his *Appendix* II: 683f.

42 See Bouffartigue (1992: 114–17). Demarolle (1986: 44) gives 180 references to scripture in the *C.Gal*.; Cf. Meredith (1980: 1147); Klein (1986: 286); Smith (1995: 205) and Simmons (forthcoming 2017a).

43 For the literature on this topic, see the standard works cited earlier and Dostalova (1982).

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